

verbit^y



Making Learning Accessible & Engaging for All

A compilation of expert insights on effective learning delivery

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Introduction

In the past year, professionals in the education community emerged as true leaders. They quickly adapted their classrooms and standard formats for education delivery to account for unimaginable pandemic restrictions. They made strides to offer greater student support and consider additional challenges to assist students learning remotely.

What effectively became known as emergency remote learning has now evolved. New best practices for online learning now complement years of existing research on how to craft effective online learning environments. Incredible breakthroughs have also been made, with more institutions adopting ed-tech tools and new student engagement methods. Video has been at the core of all of these shifts, with learning moving to web conferencing platforms like Zoom, events moving to virtual settings and on-demand lecture recordings being offered to students for greater flexibility.

However, video presents challenges to learners, especially when it's not delivered effectively. Verbit therefore recruited education thought leaders and video experts to share their unique perspectives on how to effectively incorporate video to make for inclusive, engaging experiences both now and long-term.

This eBook serves as a guide for education professionals as university leaders, professors, disability directors, instructional designers and video experts offer ideas to make learning more accessible and engaging to diverse students.



eBook Insights & Sources

Verbit organized a virtual conference, EduALL: Making Higher Education Work for All Students, in April 2021 for more than 500 participants. The live event featured multiple panel sessions, as well as highlighted key video platforms which are disrupting the student experience and creating exciting opportunities for interactivity, engagement and accessibility. Verbit gathered insights from the live EduALL event sessions and has adapted them into this eBook.



Watch the session on-demand to hear from these expert speakers directly.

Multi-Format Teaching Hacks





The past academic year presented educators with unique challenges, requiring them to implement new technology-driven teaching modalities to accommodate remote learners. COVID-19 resulted in a chaotic transition compared to the past where delivering online learning in technology-mediated ways ran smoothly. Education experts, **Dr. Sherri Restauri, Senior Executive Director for Digital Learning, Carolina Coastal University**, and **Dr. Thomas Tobin, Faculty Developer & Professional Consultant, University of Wisconsin – Madison**, shared tips to help institutions lower the barriers for learners and take work off educators' plates.

What Institutions Are Saying

Live viewers offered their takes for teaching preferences and concerns in light of the pandemic.

How would you rank your preference for the following course modalities?

No. 1 Face-to-face **No. 2** Hybrid **No. 3** Online **No. 4** Hyflex

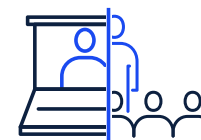
What has been your biggest concern in teaching during the academic year for 2020/2021?

#1 Concern: Accessibility - The pandemic forced institutions to do a "remote swap." At the onset of COVID-19, some of the requisite technologies were unavailable and inaccessible to users or unsupported at many institutions.

Course Modalities



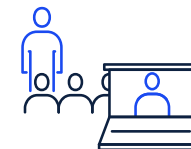
Face-to-face



Hybrid



Online



Hyflex



#2 Concern: Engagement – The shift to fully remote learning across the country raised questions as to how educators can foster interactivity and personal connections among students.

Rethinking “Accessibility”

Dr. Tobin challenged educators to rebrand accessibility as “access.” Often “accessibility” is thought of by campus leaders as only access to education for students with disabilities.

Instead, “access” refers to learning challenges experienced by everyone. “Access is more powerful as a framing construct,” he said, and can also be used to account for students who live far from campus or have work responsibilities they must juggle. To do so, Dr. Tobin suggests instructors build education plans around the digital space and then step back to do so for face-to-face. The result is improved comprehension, study skills and student learning.

Tips and Tricks: Improving Learning Outcomes

Record lectures and add closed captions and transcripts later: This approach enables users to reference materials and even run keyword searches to improve student comprehension and offer additional means with which to study.

“Access is more powerful as a framing construct”



Dr. Thomas Tobin

University of Wisconsin-
Madison



-
- **Follow the “Rule of Three”:** The technologies available to instructors can be daunting. Pick no more than three technologies to focus on to help students meet the learning objectives in their courses.
 - **Think about Universal Design for Learning (UDL) with a different spin:** Educators should consider UDL for both students and faculty. The goal is to increase access, but also lower barriers to learning for all stakeholders at the university.
 - **Consider UDL when designing assignments:** Ask students what they want. Give them free choice for their preferred presentation modality. Let students pick the assignments they feel would capture their learning styles best, which immediately increases engagement and successful learning outcomes. This method is referred to as “student agency”.
 - **Don’t replicate the classroom to remote learning environments:** It’s simply not feasible for educators to try to include everything that they did in-person in classrooms to remote settings; it will lead to instructor “burnout.”

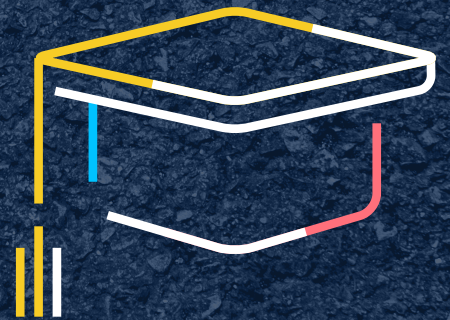
Key Takeaways

- Redefine “accessibility” as “access” to shift the focus to challenges faced by all in learning, not just those with disabilities
 - Access and engagement are essential in creating successful learning outcomes
 - Student agency is a key component of motivation
 - Selecting three classroom technologies to focus on will decrease the chance of instructor burnout
-



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Shifts in Disability Services





For many education professionals, last year presented a shift in mindset:

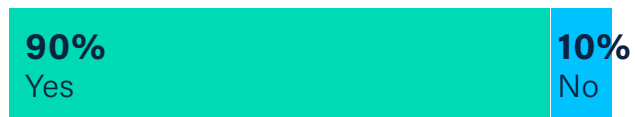
Responding to accessibility requests → leading with accessibility in mind

Why? The shift to online and the change in modality caused a significant number of students to recognize needs for disability services that they had not needed before.

Leigh Culley, along with Amanda Jackson, Assistant Director for Assistive Technology Services, Disability Resource Center at the University of Florida, shared recent shifts and changes being experienced in their roles. One of the most notable changes has been the involvement of others outside of the standard role focused on student accessibility.

Our audience poll signifies audience agreement:

Are you finding that more individuals at your school outside of the "disability department" are involved in helping to meet the needs of students?



Jackson: We are holistically supporting our students. I have been getting so many different people reaching out with wanting to be inclusive and keeping disability in mind. It's becoming more of a valued aspect of diversity.

"In the past year, we've had almost a 70 percent increase in the number of students registered with our office."



Leigh Culley
University of Pittsburgh



Culley: The pandemic catapulted that trend and that experience. More than ever, stakeholders across the university are taking an interest more than they have in the past and really embracing the concept of disability as an aspect of diversity. We're seeing individuals throughout the faculty and all departments, academic areas of the university, advisors, different individuals in student affairs. Anyone who's in a programming capacity, whether it be student-facing programming or any type of departmental meetings, programs that occur within units at the university, senate counsel, board of trustees, all the way up to the Chancellor's Office.

Jackson: Different people across the university are reaching out that may have never reached out before or have dabbled in it, but now they're jumping into it full force. I've seen a massive influx in student organizations that are also talking about accessibility. It's not only impacting the professionals in the institution, but also our students are becoming mindful.

What shifts are you experiencing with regard to disability services?

Jackson: We're **consulting** more with faculty and student affairs partners about what universal design accessibility and live captioning are. "I've had **so many people recently just want to include live captioning in their events**, which is exciting because they're seeing the benefit of things that we might have only utilized for a very small population, but they're realizing the benefit holistically to all participants in a different way to engage in the content."

Audience Poll:

Who at your school outside of the 'disability department' is now involved in helping to meet the needs of students?

43% IT

31% Student affairs

12% Academic affairs

12% Students & student organizations



Online virtual meetings have made us more accessible to our students and are resulting in fewer no-shows. "It's given us a way to build rapport with our students that we might not have ever been able to... It's been nice to be able to humanize ourselves in ways that maybe in-person, you would have never gotten."

Culley: When you bring up the idea of connecting with students remotely, that was one of our biggest challenges initially... We implemented video remote meetings right away to be able to provide the continuity of service with students. Shifting that has really allowed us to have that uninterrupted access to students, allowing them to connect with us in a way that they haven't before. We as well have seen that result of higher attendance rates of appointments, fewer no-shows, almost no cancellations when compared to past semesters. Students are telling us that this method really is more accessible to them. That's been really a positive that has come out of this... With video meetings, students are able to connect with us anywhere in the world.

We really identified the barriers that existed at the intersection of student disability and course design, realizing that some accommodations that had been approved and implemented in the traditional learning environment may no longer be relevant and may require some additional considerations.

We saw a big shift in the need to ensure that digital accessibility course design for our students with sensory impairments was really one of our top priorities. We've had a big shift in the number of students seeking services. I think that this environment has maybe brought to light some impairments, or some impact of disability, or medical condition that maybe historically or previously hadn't been noticed.



What shifts have you experienced with implementing Universal Design principles?

Culley: We've really experienced a tremendous shift in scope and scale of implementation of live captioning for synchronous instruction and closed captioning for asynchronous. Interestingly, this created equal access for students with those sensory impairments.

University of Pittsburgh has always been traditionally an in-person institution, students at large had not really had the opportunity previously to experience multi-modal approaches to learning within the lecture environment, and so they **noticed the enhancement to learning for them and their ability to engage in content in a way that they hadn't before.**

Professors became more aware and considerate of students in different time zones and how to make learning more flexible so they could engage on their terms. With exams and assessments, faculty are steering away from finite timed exams within the class period and shifting to a more flexible approach of completing an exam with a wider 12-24 hour window.

Jackson: Some classes have required attendance and others don't. Some students had experienced attendance as a barrier. They're having more flexibility to do their class later in the evening or early in the morning. Maybe that's better for if they focus more in the morning or they focus better in the evening, or maybe they have family at home, and so they need to do their stuff at night because they're sharing the computer, and so faculty are taking that

"Allowing them to be able to go back, rewind, pause to really make sure that they are capturing the content in a more comprehensive way was something that has come out about asynchronous instruction."

Leigh Culley



into consideration. That's really allowing their instruction and their content to be much more accessible.

We've also seen an increase in audio recording and lecture recording, resulting in an increase in closed captioning. More students are able to engage. **Some students don't even want to listen to the recording, and they just read the transcripts**, or they just read the captions or they go along. It's just the shift in being open to considering things that maybe we never would have considered before. In the past, there was push back on lecture recording. Now, professors are recognizing that recording lectures which students can reference on their own time saves them time from not needing to meet with the student one-on-one to review what they missed.

"Faculty are asking me, what does it mean to have alternative texts, or what does that actually do? The fact that they're even asking these questions or curious, just helps everyone. It's exciting."

With extensions on assignments being the most popular trend, Jackson and Culley note that professors should continue to rethink set test times if they're not already. Allowing a student to have 24 hours to complete an exam can make a big difference. The exam itself can still be timed, giving the student 50 minutes to complete it, but giving them the ability to choose the start time or account for known times where Internet bandwidth and connection may not be optimal when shared with others for example, can really help them while they're remote.

Audience Poll:

What is the main trend you're seeing in terms of greater request for accessibility and instructional items?

47% Extensions on assignments

21% Access to written lecture content

21% Captioning

10% Flexible attendance

What shifts at large has your university experienced with regard to inclusion of students with disabilities?

Jackson: The University of Florida is just really accessibility-oriented right now, and they are wanting to talk with and bring students with disabilities to the table more frequently. Disability is being valued as an aspect of diversity, and we're now seeing how things that might have been considered something that only the Disability Resource Center needs or only students with disabilities might need, really support people.

Disability is no longer an afterthought. an issue or consideration for DRS, the disability office, it's now become more of a campus-wide consideration. How can we understand this? How can we approach this? What solutions might there be institutionally wide, not just 'Okay, let's throw this to the disability office and they'll take care of it.'

Key takeaways



Culley: "Fostering relationships with your partners, internal to the university and external in the community. People still see us as the experts, which is great and a certainly a nice designation, but I think it's time to expand the responsibility and knowledge outward to include all areas of the institution... My counterparts in the ACC schools decided let's connect on a monthly basis. Let's share best practices."



Jackson: "I always say keep Verbit in mind whenever you might need live captioning needs. Students, student organizations or different campus partners are reaching out to me. Typically, I was facilitating live captioning mostly for courses, and now they're wanting to have live captioning for their programming. It's been nice to be able to expand other people's awareness of Verbit. It's just us all coming together collaboratively to support one another."



Watch the session on-demand to hear from these expert speakers directly.

Remote Learning Reimagined





"Prior to 2020,
approximately 50
percent of faculty
had no experience
teaching online.
That number is
about zero now."

-Karen Yoshino, PhD

Experts Karen Yoshino and Darcy Hardy have had a front row seat to the 2020 disruption and how it impacted higher education.



Karen Yoshino, PhD

Adjunct faculty in the e-learning program, Cal State University, East Bay

~30 years of experience in public and private higher education

Higher Education Lead Strategist and Consultant at Van Allen Strategies

12 years of experience at Blackboard



Darcy Hardy, PhD

Academic Affairs for North America at Blackboard

~30 years in public higher education in the University of Texas System

Career has been distance and then online learning since the late '80s.

Spent three years with the Obama administration from 2011-2013

The majority of the EduALL viewers who joined live said their institution has a post-COVID plan for delivering online courses:



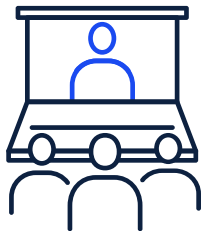


Exploring Quantitative and Qualitative Pandemic Responses

Hardy shared her observation in terms of how colleges and universities responded to COVID-19.

"It was the busiest here ever for those of us involved in online learning at institutions, everything blew up... When I started in online learning in the mid '90s, all we really wanted, we thought, was to be accepted by mainstream higher ed, by the institution as a whole. COVID was a 'be careful what you ask for.'"

Proof in the numbers:



9,000%

increase in use of
virtual classroom



60%

increase in mobile
device use YoY



128M+

launches in third-party
tools for proctoring,
lab simulations, etc.



91M+

plus launches of
additional Blackboard
tools within the LMS



Remote vs. Online Learning

There's a difference between remote learning and online learning. Hardy said it's not just about numbers; it's about how people are viewing remote learning versus online learning, which are two very separate things. The main difference: remote learning experiences are "holding tanks with some live instruction that are not strategic."

Remote Learning

Online Learning

Reflexive	Strategic
Lack instructional design	Includes instructional design
Attempts to replicate F2F	Vision, strategy, support
Minimal training	Not dependent upon synchronous delivery
Limited Interaction & Student Support	Engaging and interactive elements
May not use an LMS	Uses an LMS and Internet





Students questioning the return on investment in their college education as almost

7 out of 10 feel the online instruction they received this Winter is worse than in-person instruction *

"This is not the fault of the delivery model. It's because schools just simply weren't prepared for remote learning," Hardy said. It wasn't the technology's fault. It wasn't the faculty members' fault, It wasn't even the institution's fault. "We have to recognize that this happened and start thinking about the impact and what we're going to do to fix it."

Yoshino has been actively educating professionals on the opportunities higher education should act on as a result of this imposed disruption through three hats.

The **Faculty Hat**

- Developing instructional design skills takes years to achieve
- Challenge is greater for faculty without help of instructional designers
- Tools to translate face-to-face courses to online are both abundant (platforms) and scarce (curriculum design & faculty support)

*May 1, 2020 <https://tophat.com/press-releases/adrift-in-a-pandemic-survey/>



The **Student of Higher Education Hat**

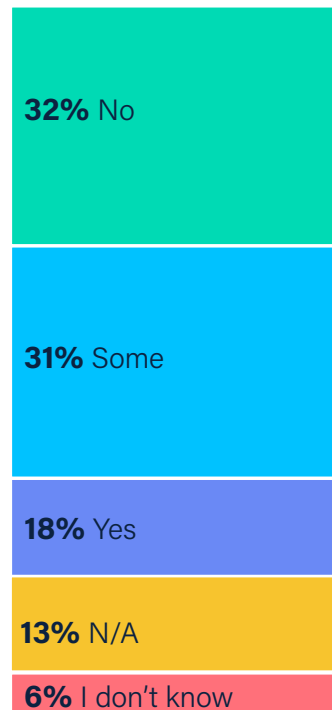
"I've found that writers and researchers, while giving praise to higher education for making the pandemic shift to online, were cautious about predicting how higher education would take that experience, and move forward to something new."

Faculty who had never taught online before began to see how using technology provided new possibilities for teaching and engaging with students, Yoshino said. However, to make that shift from remote to quality online instruction practices, they're likely to encounter the systemic problem of a lack of infrastructure to transfer their face-to-face courses to online.

The **Consultant Hat**

Yoshino launched a micro course, Placing Your Face-to-Face Course Online. It has written and video instructions, as well as an organizing tool to guide faculty through the process of making that shift. Yoshino said it's important for educators to learn about the process of curriculum design, pedagogy and the logic of online instructional design.

Has school mandated the teaching tools and technologies you will use in the Fall academic term?*



* <https://tophat.com/teaching-resources/infographics/tophat-faculty-survey/>



Lasting Effects Are Likely

- #1 More colleges and universities will move to online to increase enrollment and serve new student populations. To do so, they need a strategic plan for online, organizational infrastructure in place and leadership to champion these efforts.
- #2 Students will be able to complete more degrees, online certificates and microcredentials totally online.
- #3 Seamless transition to online with sudden shut down - accessible courses via ed-tech platform and instructional design policies and best practices in place.

Dispel cultural myths that:

1. Online is inferior to face-to-face
2. Remote is equivalent to online learning
3. Online learning is financial boon

Drive awareness of online edu model

1. Face-to-face model dominates
2. Low awareness of instructional design
3. Low awareness of leveraging technology

Create ownership & assign leaders

1. No more abdication of technology-related matters to IT
2. Academic leadership to involve faculty in decisions
3. Need for experience and expertise in quality online



Closing Existing Gaps for Online Learning Success

More leadership and collaboration must take place among university stakeholders.

"In many institutions that we see, we see the responsibilities for online programs a lot of times in the hands of the Chief Technology Officer. In effect, this is an abdication of responsibility by academic leaders," Yoshino said.

Going forward, faculty must be involved in important decisions on educational delivery. Decisions can no longer be made by academic leaders without true expertise in what effective online delivery looks like. The institutions have to choose to invest in the effort to educate themselves, Hardy said.

"Online training for faculty development should be mandated at some level even if it's just at a minimal threshold. We don't want to be in this situation again where we have our faculty struggling."



Darcy Hardy, PhD
Blackboard



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Exploring K-12 Challenges & Opportunities





Lisa Ford, Special Education Director for the Nye County School District, and Jeremy Shorr, Senior Consultant for the Teaching Institute for Excellence in STEM (TIES), gathered to discuss new ways of learning and preparing K-12 students for the future.

A Remote Learning Success Story: The Nye School District

Ford shared how her district was able to make a successful transition to remote learning environment. She offered a variety of methods others should consider when faced with similar challenges:

- Forge an online learning vision you can stand by with confidence
 - Examine instructional design for K-12 students and work across all learning modalities to meet the needs of students with varying abilities
 - Encourage educators to seek help in instructional design
 - Train educators on LMS use to support remote teaching styles
 - Revisit what student engagement should look like in online learning environments
 - Pursue a new way of thinking and an understanding of the vulnerabilities in transitioning students to something new, such as learning remotely
 - Build upon students' understanding of technology and incorporate what they do and don't know into planning, educational design and teaching
-



- Make use of existing online meeting forums to share information and learn from others
- Set up working groups to examine everything from instructional design to social and emotional wellbeing to community outreach
- Recognize that effective communication involves multiple modalities

Preparing Students for the Future

When students learn, they do so by asking questions through touching, building and modeling. As many schools and educators reconsider their methods for teaching, Shorr encouraged them to step back and ensure K-12 students are being taught effectively to prepare for the future of work.

Schorr presented a real world example of fueling effective learning for his daughter. He filmed her operating a model airplane. Years later, his daughter was able to recall the details of operating the plane because she was given the knowledge and tools to find the answers on her own. Shorr quotes Seymour Papert in providing that “the role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge.” In essence, he allowed his daughter to answer her own questions through the knowledge and tools he provided to her.

“The role of the teacher is to create the conditions for invention rather than provide ready-made knowledge.”

- Seymour Papert
Teacher & Researcher, MIT



Shorr also shared the importance of focusing students on adopting the skills needed to solve novel world problems. He noted that many jobs which exist today will be automated and become irrelevant with the maturity of Artificial Intelligence.

Shorr raised important questions for educators to ask themselves both now and as they aim to craft effective learning experiences rooted more in technology going forward:

- How do we prepare students for jobs we have yet to imagine?
- How do we train kids to think differently?
- How do we allow students to think in more novel and innovative ways?
- How do we shift students from a grading model to a competency-based model?
- How can technology be used to inspire them?

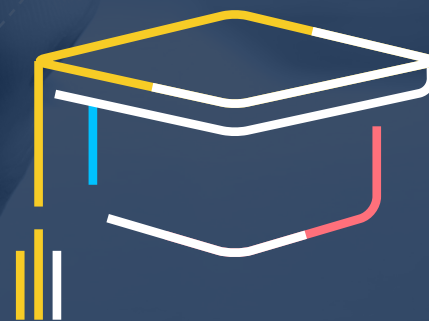
As educators look to reinvent their processes, professionals in K-12 and higher education settings should ensure they're preparing their students with real-world practical skills, not just textbook knowledge. Opportunities to offer them hands-on experiences and innovative ways to learn will prove fruitful in years to come as they begin to prepare themselves to enter the workforce. Educators have an opportunity to provide them with tangible, tech-focused skills, which will help to enrich their students' career prospects.



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Start

Exploring Multimodal Learning & Video





Jeff Rubinstein, Vice President of Product Strategy, Kaltura, shared accessibility insights and tips on improving student comprehension through the use of video. Video can be the solution to many accessibility challenges, he said.

Key advantages of video:

- Can be viewed and reviewed as often as possible, in any location and with others
- Reduces reliance on immediate attention & note taking
- Can be viewed on a variety of different devices offering students' choice
- Can be indexed and searched across an entire video library
- Provides advanced analytics

Video elements to consider to support multimodal learning & student needs:

- A compliant player that includes keyboard controls and the ability to manage the contrast ratio
 - The video must have captions and any related files should be accessible. For example, the video should include metadata to demonstrate what it's about and who's in it.
-



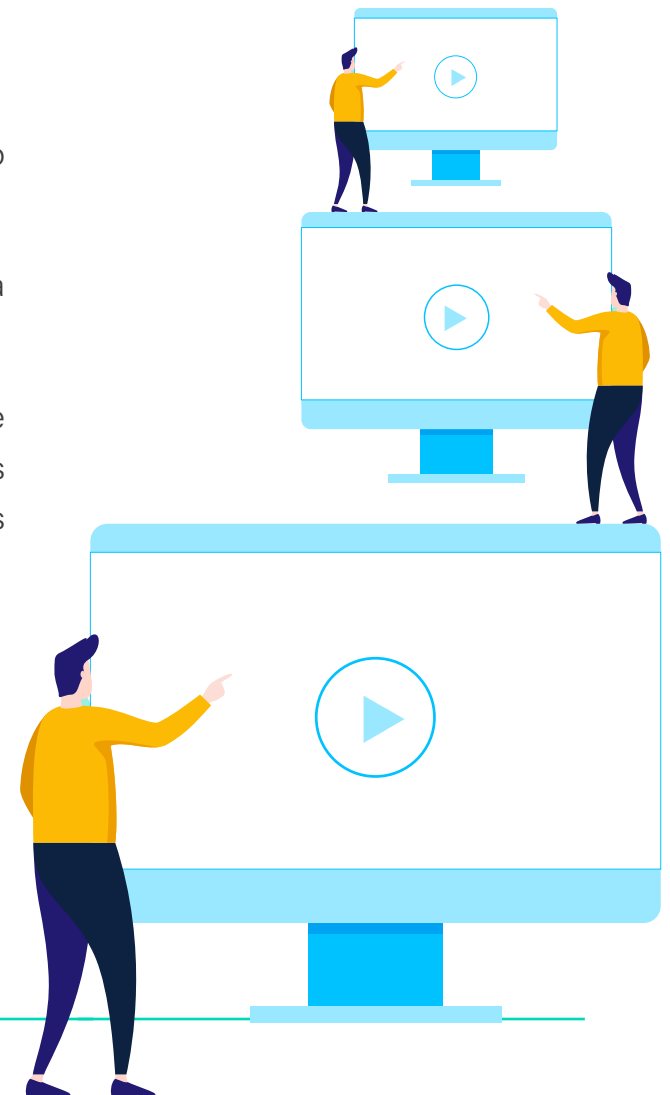
- Enhancements like translations and alternate audio tracks can be added
- Video should be reusable and allow for rich transcription editing, thereby promoting efficiency in reuse.

Look to scale video efforts:

Those who have rights to the media can use features like 'find and replace' to edit it themselves.

Put workflows in place: videos of a certain type can be tagged to receive a certain type of treatment for consistency and efficiency.

Have a structure and management interface that allows users to delegate work to make accessibility efforts seamless. For example, Verbit integrates into Kaltura to ensure videos can be captioned efficiently to make all videos accessible and improve educational outcomes for students.





Watch the session on-demand to hear from these expert speakers directly.

Case Study: Partnering with Panopto





Finding the right partners and platforms to support online learning and video content can be tricky for university leaders. Brigham Young University (BYU), which uses Panopto and Verbit to support online video content and captioning for more than 650 online courses, presents a **success story on how to offer students effective hybrid and remote experiences.**

BYU's 3 experiences:

- Hybrid in-person and remote model: **Full-time university students**
- Online courses students with access globally: **Independent Study program**
- Online program: **Full-time high school students**

With so much online video content, having a user-friendly platform with exceptional accessibility is vital to the school and its students' success.

Solving BYU's Online Learning Challenges

According to **Corby Kelly, Head of Education Video, Panopto**, the company's mission is to "help anyone share knowledge with video." BYU is implementing many of Panopto's high-tech features to support its online courses, including:





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- Secure and searchable video content
 - Easy video uploading for faculty and students
 - Powerful, but easy to use recording tools
 - Ability to add analytics and quizzes
 - Split screens between the speaker and the presenter

As a result, BYU leaders are successfully accommodating students with tools that make video learning more simple and engaging.

Video Captioning: A Must for BYU

To make video courses accessible to all students, BYU uses Verbit, which integrates into Panopto. Erin Willder from BYU's continuing education department explained that the university strives to not only adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)'s legal guidelines, but offer captioning services that are high quality.

Willder found that incorporating Verbit's tools also meant a simpler captioning process. She stated that her team is "spoiled now. We're so used to Verbit doing everything so quickly and so accurately."



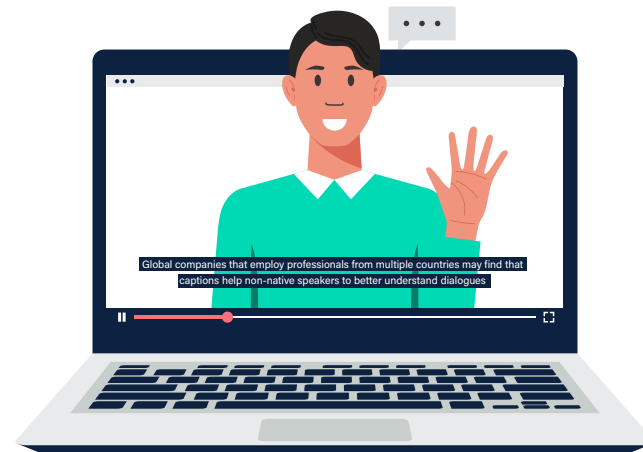
Streamlining The Captioning Process'

remove

BYU is taking advantage of automatic speech recognition (ASR) technology and Verbit's in-house Artificial Intelligence for improved transcription results. The technology continues to learn new words and accommodate different accents to hit higher accuracy each time it's used. The technology is instrumental in providing accuracy to global learners and individuals with disabilities.

BYU leaders are uploading terms that a course will use, including names of professors or students and other terminology that less sophisticated ASR often fails to capture. If editors discover gaps in the AI's knowledge, they can easily fix errors, which trains the technology for future videos.

Having videos transcribed also helps BYU students by making the uploaded content searchable. If a teacher uses phrases in a lecture video recording, BYU students can then search for the phrase to reach the exact point in the video they want to reference. **This tool helps greatly when students are studying for exams.**





Accommodating Different Languages

BYU's online offerings have attracted students globally. This development has increased the need for captioning to aid international students. **BYU is using Verbit to offer captioning in over fifteen languages. BYU can now accommodate a broader range of students with its video platform.**

Offering the Best User Experience and Making Accessible Content

Administrators at BYU understand the importance of considering budgets and the costs of implementing software and captioning services. **According to Willder, meeting legal requirements is a good reason to invest in these technologies, but not the only one. When universities can provide an exceptionally inclusive learning environment, many will rightfully refuse to settle for anything less.**





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Best Practices for Teaching on Zoom





Jane Ross, Head of EMEA Education at Zoom, spoke live to discuss the “Zoom boom”, as institutions around the globe turned to the web conferencing platform to provide continued instruction to their students in light of pandemic restrictions.

With greater usage of Zoom by institutions, the platform has evolved. New features have been launched and best practices uncovered to ensure support for students learning via Zoom. Verbit also launched an integration with Zoom to offer the option to caption and transcribe courses and meetings. These accommodations ensure an accessible experience for students with hearing loss, as well as offer a more engaging viewing experience to help all learners better absorb information while learning online.

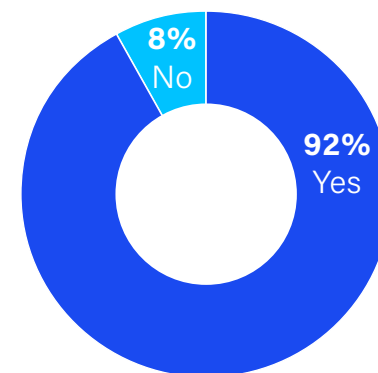
Ross highlighted some of Zoom’s key features that educators should be aware of:

Zoom Privacy

Online learning means bringing teachers and students into one another’s homes. Zoom’s **blurred background feature** as well as **background options** accommodate students learning from home who may not want others to see their surroundings. Students without upgraded computer specs can blur their backgrounds for greater privacy.

The feature also cuts down on distractions caused by anything happening in the background of students’ videos, such as pets or siblings appearing in view.

The majority of live viewers reported usage of **zoom** at their institutions:





Optimizing Engagement in Online Classes

Ross offered several tips educators can use to make online learning interactive and engaging. Educators should consider all of these strategies to help their students get the most out of their class:

Polls and Q&As: Asking students to complete polls and share their results can keep students more attentive. Also, offering them Q&A opportunities can ensure educators are aware of any gaps or confusion. Ross points out that **people decide whether to engage actively or passively observe a presentation in just five minutes**. Getting attention right away can improve student engagement levels.

Set Expectations and Rules: Help students understand expectations from the start. If teachers want cameras on, microphones muted or have other requests, they should explain those rules at the beginning of a class.

Set Time for Breaks: When classes are all online, learners need some breaks from their screens. Educators should look to diversify activities and offer time away from the computer. Activities which encourage movement are also proven to be effective, especially for K-12 learners.

Use the Chat Feature: The chat feature can help students engage without speaking. Teachers can use the chat feature to ask questions and get students to respond and facilitate ways for them to communicate with each other and riff off of peers' contributions.

Use Breakout Sessions: Use Zoom breakout rooms to allow small groups of students to work together on projects and engage in deeper discussions. Teachers can quickly move from one group to another and send messages to each group.



Sounds and Screens: Teachers can use screens or sounds on Zoom to make learning more entertaining and fun. For example, if students get an answer correct, the applause sound can praise them and keep them attentive.

Consistent Link Sharing: Students can often feel anxious about online learning and Wi-Fi issues. Making it easy to locate and access Zoom meeting links can help reduce stress.

Captioning and Accessibility

Educators must also ensure Zoom learning is both accessible and inclusive. From Deaf learners to those who may process and retain information in various ways, captioning provided by Verbit and others can help significantly.

Verbit's Zoom integration offers live captions in real-time. Students can also access live transcripts which appear as the teacher is speaking and can create notes within them to help when studying for exams later on.

Zoom Features for Educators

Instructors can also use a PowerPoint presentation as a background. The presenter can resize slides to create the best display and move through the slides within Zoom rather than using PowerPoint.

Zoom also offers the ability to customize their view of the class participants to create a seating chart of sorts. The instructor can put up to nine screens on their personal view that will stay on display regardless of the person speaking. This tool is also **helpful for students following sign language**. Without this feature, the screen can often shift away from the signing individual and default to a speaker.

Lean into Zoom Learning

The pandemic pushed educators and IT professionals at institutions to test out new tools. How else can professionals ensure online learning happening via web conferencing is being delivered effectively?

Taking the time to learn about the many education-focused Zoom features available to your class is essential. While distance learning can be challenging, the functionality and customization that technologies like Zoom provide can offer more tech-savvy classrooms as learning continues post-pandemic.



Key Takeaways

Emergency remote learning isn't online learning. Now that the Band-Aids have been removed and the world is beginning to heal and return to normalcy, it has become clear which tactics and technologies should continue to be implemented. This period of testing and trying new tactics for engagement and peer collaboration was undoubtedly a challenging one. However, it also caused education professionals to rethink the ways they were operating and gain further understandings of student concerns.

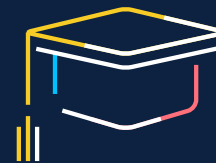
Education will only continue to evolve as its leaders emerge from the pandemic with a new open-mindedness to technologies and structures that can best serve all students. School leaders should look to embrace their diverse student bodies and proactively aim to create inclusive environments. Those who accommodate various students' changing needs will see stronger retention rates.



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questions on accessibility & inclusion,
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