



COVID-19 Education Innovations: District and School Solution Spotlights



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ExcelinEd is gathering and promoting state education innovations and resources that are helping meet the needs of students affected by school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please share this brief with your state leaders who are seeking solutions and [send us your state's or school district's innovative efforts](#) for us to amplify and share nationally.

Looking for other resources? Visit ExcelinEd's website for more information and resources:

- [State Actions Database and Map](#)
- [Resources for State and School Leaders](#)
- [Resources for Parents](#)
- [Social Emotional Learning Resources](#)
- [Education Innovations: State Solution Spotlights](#)

FOOD SECURITY

Denver Families Donate Unused School Lunch Money to Feed Those in Need

With schools closed, Denver families can donate unused lunch money already in their virtual accounts to provide meals to families in need, as reported by [Chalkbeat Colorado on April 1](#). The idea originated with a parent who contacted the Denver Public Schools Foundation to see how she could help. The parent mentioned she had lunch money in her children's "My School Bucks" account that they wouldn't use while schools are closed to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, the foundation said. Now, other families can donate their unused lunch money by filling out [this form](#).

The money goes to the Denver Public Schools Foundation's Food Security Fund, which has been paying for meals for adults in need during the week and on weekends. The Food Security Fund was started in mid-March and has raised more than \$500,000 from more than 1,100 donors, said Ashley Muramoto, communications director for the foundation, which supports Denver Public Schools. About two-thirds of the district's 92,000 students are from low-income families.

Milwaukee Voucher Schools Provide Meals for Students and Community

The [St. Marcus K-8 school system](#), which has nearly 98% of its students participating in the state voucher programs for low-income families, is providing free meals to its community as well as any families with school age children. They are also offering their own students access to food on the weekend. [St. Augustine Prep](#), another school that participates in the voucher program, is providing breakfast and lunch to any Milwaukee child.

School Bus Meal Delivery

A number of cities - including New York, Atlanta and Washington, D.C. - have adopted a "grab and go" model, which involves the creation of pre-packaged meals that are available for families at specific pick-up spots around the city. However, this approach puts the burden on families to navigate their way to these spots regularly, sometimes without an easy transportation option. That's why places like [Loudoun County](#) in Virginia and [Wayne Township](#) in Indiana have repurposed their now dormant bus system into a meal delivery service.



DIGITAL OR DISTANCE LEARNING & ACCESS

Success Academy's Approach to Distance Learning

[Success Academy](#) is going completely virtual in response to pandemic-related school closures, and founder and CEO Eva Moskowitz hosted a webinar on March 17 explaining their strategy. Students will follow a schedule, with middle school students attending school virtually from 9 to 4 and high schoolers from 9 to 5:30 Monday through Friday. Elementary school students will have a 2.5- to 3.5-hour day. One teacher in each grade—the most engaging and inspiring, the clearest, perhaps the funniest—will be selected to deliver the lessons via video calls in each subject area to all students in the grade. This [approach](#) frees the remaining teachers to take attendance, problem solve and work individually with students by phone, such as seeing to their individual needs, reviewing their work and addressing misconceptions. For more information see [CRPE's blog, Brave New World at Success Academy](#) and [Success Academy Remote Learning FAQs](#).

Miami-Dade County Shifts to Completely Virtual Education

The Miami-Dade School District has been preparing for the possibility of school closures since day one, according to a press release on March 18. Earlier in the month, the district provided teachers with additional professional development online to support distance learning. In addition, a support hotline was established for teachers, students and parents seeking assistance with distance learning. The expectation is that students will continue to progress in their learning under the consultation and guidance of their teachers. For more information, see [Miami-Dade County Public Schools Instructional Continuity Plan](#) and [Miami-Dade County Public Schools Press Release](#).

ASU for You Provides Online Educational Content for Everyone

Arizona State University has gathered a vast collection of its online resources onto a single platform called [ASU for You](#), available now as people stay at home during the COVID-19 pandemic. ASU for You offers a wide array of content, much of it at no cost, for all learners – from elementary school students to adults – as well as resources for teachers and parents who are navigating teaching and learning at home. ASU For You includes many learning tools at no cost such as virtual field trips; library access; video lessons, labs and simulations in K-12 subject areas; tutoring, online courses and training videos for teachers or parents teaching from home; and courses for college credit.

They were able to use the same platform to transition their own ASU Prep K-12 students to online learning.

How Three Indianapolis Charter School Networks Are Transitioning to Virtual Learning

Three school networks in Indianapolis didn't skip a beat in going virtual, [CRPE wrote in *The 74*](#) on March 24. At Purdue Polytechnic, which stresses project and experiential learning, students were accustomed to working on their individual laptops. For much of the day, students continued to work in small groups, connected by video, as they tackled their fifth major project of the year. Paramount Schools of Excellence established a call center to triage concerns from



parents, whether regarding technical support, translation services, academic needs or nonacademic needs such as day care – “anything that could be breaking down in the home.” And at Indianapolis Classical Schools, students sign into [Haiku](#), a digital learning platform, and attend online office hours with their teachers through video calls.

Donors and Businesses Step Up to Fill Digital Divide in Delaware

Delaware school districts and businesses are providing students who lack devices or internet with Chromebooks and internet access in order to tackle the issue of internet deserts, [Delaware Online reported on April 2](#). In Delaware, anywhere from 16,000 to 20,000 households lack computer access, a number that is shocking to most, said Jake Voorhees, managing partner at NerdIt Now, one of the participating donors.

Some districts are turning to “drive-up Wi-Fi” options to help fill the gaps. In Indian River School District, staff and students can access Wi-Fi from high school parking lots on weekdays. New Castle County is offering similar Wi-Fi hotspots in eight locations across the county. NerdIt Now is working with local internet provider WhyFly to provide people in need with a year of free internet.

Lindsay Unified School District Provides Free Community Wi-Fi for Lindsay Learners

Lindsay Unified School District in Utah has embarked on a mission to provide 24/7 access to learning content to every learner. The goal of the [Community Wi-Fi project](#) is to provide at-home wireless internet access to all Lindsay families. The project, which began several years ago, is now more important than ever as all students are learning remotely.

Embry-Riddle Offers Free Online Courses for K-12 Students

The [Florida Department of Education](#) announced Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University is offering “Aviation is Your Future,” a free massive open online course, as an introduction to aviation for children aged 8 to 17. The self-paced, six-hour online course helps fuel a passion for aviation by introducing young people to aviation fundamentals.

Learners enrolled in this online course explore aspects of flight such as lift, gravity, thrust and drag. They also learn to identify the major parts of an airplane, describe the flight characteristics of a helicopter and discuss the goals of space exploration. The free course is a project of the Women in Aviation International (WAI) Chapter at Embry-Riddle Worldwide, offered in conjunction with WAI.

NOLA Charter Schools Meet Families’ Needs

[Educators for Quality Alternative \(EQA\) Schools](#) operates two charter schools and has expanded to a pilot program with NOLA charter schools, including a middle school this year and a high school next year. They first conducted an assessment of how many students have access to the internet. Through a partnership with T-Mobile, EQA was able to rapidly deploy hotspots to families throughout the city so that students could connect to each other and join online lessons. EQA also created an “intense case management system” that assigns students to deans and teachers to track their performance and well-being. Heads of the school system contacted families to find out what their needs were and expedited the process to purchase additional technology.



GENERAL HEALTH & SAFETY

High Schools Use 3-D printers for Medical Supplies

Under the guidance of Engineering and Technology Curriculum Coordinator Mehmet Gokcek, two Harmony School of Innovation interns plan to supply at least 2,000 3-D printed masks to first responders and emergency room personnel. “As long as we have supplies, we can continue production,” Gokcek told the [Houston Chronicle](#) on March 26. “This fight with COVID-19 looks like it could last a year, and we want to provide supplies to first responders and folks at ER services as long as we can.” Each mask costs \$1 and takes five hours to print.

Additionally, five school districts in northeastern Nebraska will use their new 3-D printers to [print out personal protective equipment](#) for nearby healthcare workers, Governor Pete Ricketts said. The school districts got a dozen high-quality 3-D printers to use with junior high students through a state program in 2018 in partnership with Nucor Detailing Center, the major US steel producer's drafting facility in Norfolk, according to the governor's office.

Florida Colleges Donate Supplies to Medical Community

With students out of classrooms and supplies not being used, [Florida's 28 state colleges and three private colleges](#) have already donated 100 ventilators along with other medical supplies to Florida's medical community. The colleges are also preparing extra donations in the coming weeks. In addition to donations, many are using 3D printers to create face masks for hospitals, including [Gulf Coast State College](#) and [St. Petersburg College](#).