

## 100KIN10 TEACHER FORUM SHARE-OUT-CALL SUMMARIES

### About the 100kin10 Teacher Forum

The [100Kin10 Teacher Forum](#) helps us keep a pulse on what's happening "on the ground" in classrooms and schools across America. Members organize STEM teachers in their communities and hold conversations to gather information about what STEM teachers are hearing, seeing, and experiencing. These insights are then shared with 100Kin10 and used to inform how we address the [Grand Challenges](#). We also share what we're hearing through the Teacher Forum broadly with the 100Kin10 network and the field in the hopes that these insights will have broader resonance.

### SHARE OUT CALL 1:

On **May 21 2020**, we had a special guest, John B. King, former U.S. Secretary of Education and President and CEO of The Education Trust. The Education Trust is a national nonprofit that's working to identify and close educational opportunity and achievement gaps. King grew up with both parents as NYC public school teachers. However, after his mother passed away, King relied on his teachers at school for guidance. They helped him create a safe space. He explained, "**Teachers gave me a sense of hope and purpose.**"

During the call, Secretary King outlined the existing inequities in education that have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the biggest challenges in education has been and remains the inequities faced by students of color (i.e. black and Latinx), english learners, and disabled students. Teachers on the call shared their own reflections on the challenges Secretary King outlined.

- 1) This time is difficult for everyone, but some groups are disproportionately burdened and at risk of falling further behind.

The challenges these students already faced were broadened even further by the pandemic. We see gaps when it comes to access to the internet and technology tools, mental support for student's social and emotional wellness,

and many more challenges. We also see the added burden faced by parents who serve as essential workers struggling to support their children who may be learning from home while also being required to leave their homes for work.

**“This crisis is going to have a disproportionate impact on prospective teachers of color. I am worried that this will be a lasting impact.”**

2) Teachers are being stretched and getting creative.

In response to the pandemic, educators were forced to adapt to an entirely new way of teaching almost overnight. How can we channel that momentum and the lessons we are learning from these experiences moving forward? Teachers are already doing a great job finding creative ways to teach and engage their students remotely. Several teachers explained that students need to learn how to work asynchronously. However, to work asynchronously they must learn the skill sets that will allow them to do that effectively. Some of these skills are time setting, being goal orientated, asking questions when they need help, and certain routines they must develop. Many students are learning these skills that are essential for remote learning, but they are also vital life skills that will remain valuable to students forever.

3) School won't be the same this fall

One of the biggest worries is whether there will be enough resources and proper plans to keep students, teachers, and school staff safe. Schools are going to have to change a lot of elements to accommodate physical distancing such as, transportation, staggered schedules, adjustments to lunch time routines, and much more. Even with all this we might end up with a student or faculty member that gets sick. With this we need to have strategies implemented on how to physically isolate students and a contact-tracing strategy. Many Teacher Forum members also expressed their concerns regarding grading. Would eliminating traditional grading take the pressure off students or set them up for failure in the future?

## **SHARE OUT CALL 2:**

On **July 21 2020**, we held our second Teacher Forum share-out call. As the new school year approaches, teachers are hearing more from their school districts on what the fall school year might look like. Many teachers shared their concern that there is still no plan for the new school year. Others explained that their school district will remain remote at the start of the school year. A few teachers shared that their school was going back to in-person learning. Regardless of the decisions made by their school administrators, most teachers expressed not feeling as confident about the new school year.

### 1) Reaching students during COVID-19

Teachers saw positive changes in their students such as collaboration and creativity. Nevertheless, teachers continue to ask themselves whether or not the material they are providing to students is actually reaching them. Many teachers are demanding data at the district level, to get a better sense of what's working and what is not working for their students.

**“Teachers really like to see the excitement in kids when STEM is integrated into their lesson.”**

Teaching remotely makes it difficult for teachers to pick-up cues from their students. Not only is it a greater challenge to connect with students at a distance, educators expressed that it also makes it more difficult to determine who in their class may be struggling.

### 2) New ways of engagement and grading

Teachers are continuing to find creative ways to engage every student in their class throughout the COVID pandemic. They are encouraging to work in different ways and different places. Students are asked to explore their homes, outside, and to rethink their typical ways of submitting assignments. These techniques can have the positive effect of engaging both students and parents.

**“We want the students to take more ownership of their own artifacts and be able to talk through them.”**

**“STEM doesn’t come in a kit, it is really a set of skills and a mindset.”**

3) New Tools

Teachers shared the silver lining that as a result of the pandemic, better curriculums may come out as a by-product of remote learning. During the pandemic students and teachers alike are experiencing shortages of time and attention from their students. Many teachers want to focus on the material that is most important instead of cramming through entire lessons. Educators continue to innovate lesson plans and are becoming skilled at using a whole host of online tools to teach their students. Google classroom seems to be the most popular resource by far, but others include: Flipgrid, Seesaw, Jamboard tool, and Padlet tool.

**SHARE OUT CALL 3:**

On October 7 2020, we held our third Teacher Forum share-out call. As the new school year has started, teachers are still adapting to new teaching requirements from their school districts. Many teachers are still concerned about keeping their students engaged through remote or hybrid learning. Despite considerable challenges, every teacher on the call shared that their colleagues were a driving force for helping them get through this difficult time.

1) Keeping students engaged during remote/hybrid learning

Some teachers notice a difference in their students during remote or hybrid learning. They see students don’t engage as much as when they are in the classroom. At home students may struggle to focus on their school work. When students are in school, the setting is dedicated for them to come and learn. Virtually, teachers can struggle to connect with their students and oftentimes they must simply trust that they have the full attention of each

child online. This problem is compounded by the challenge of converting many STEM subjects into an online only format.

### **“How do we keep STEM in the heart of what we do?”**

#### *2) Technology is the new wave*

Due to the high engagement in remote learning, teachers are becoming increasingly tech savvy. Teachers have created and shared databases of online resources that have been helpful for educators to incorporate into their daily learning. This eliminates the time consuming struggle of needing to do research on each and every program they might use. Teachers expressed how helpful technology has been and how it will undoubtedly change traditional ways of teaching in the future. Teachers predicted that students may no longer need to miss a day of school if they are sick, a snow day hits up north, or if a hurricane blows through the south - students may still be asked to come to their virtual classrooms. Parents are also able to engage more with their children’s learning. Parents and teachers are able to virtually connect with an easier and faster method. This opens the door for the possibility of more constant and consistent connection between teachers, students, and families in the future.

#### *3) Leaning on one another*

Teachers expressed one thing that has been most helpful this school year is having the support of colleagues, administrators, parents, and students. It has been helpful to have one colleague become an expert on a specific tool and for that person to share their knowledge with others. This prevents teachers from becoming overwhelmed by eliminating the burden of having to learn to use many new tools and platforms all at once. Teachers now rely on having that help and support from each other. Some teachers have also expressed that having the support of their administrators has been invaluable as well. Those who feel they are receiving support from school administrators expressed that they have been patient with them as they adopt new ways of teaching required by their school district. That flexibility has also sometimes

meant that parents and students have also become more flexible throughout the many transitions caused by the pandemic. Throughout this share-out call teachers reminded each other that they aren't alone.

**"Give everyone enough room to figure this out."**

#### **SHARE OUT CALL 4:**

On November 17 2020, we held our last Teacher Forum Share-out call of the year. As we are halfway through the fall semester, teachers reflected on the first half of the school year and made predictions on how their teaching might look different in the months ahead. COVID has changed the ways teachers collaborate and receive professional development. In our last share out call, many teachers highlighted a desire to receive more help from their school administrators. Teachers also reflected on how best to incorporate real life experiences to help students rise to the occasion, specifically in STEM classrooms.

##### **1) COVID has changed professional development**

During the pandemic, many teachers cited difficulty participating in professional development opportunities. Attending remote workshops has been challenging in the midst of larger workloads and increases in the needs of students and families. Some teachers acknowledged feeling isolated. Many miss having opportunities to learn from and meet with their colleagues in-person. In a remote or hybrid teaching environment, educators lose out on the many informal, unplanned interactions they once had with other teachers working in the same school building. One teacher explained, "the best professional development happens during hallway exchanges". Teachers did highlight the importance of making connections with each other online and particularly on social media. Active teacher Facebook pages have proven invaluable for some.

**"Professional development has to be relevant but also has to be engaging for teachers to be able to bring it back to their classrooms."**

2) What can administrators do to keep and retain strong STEM instructors

Teachers feel as if they aren't receiving enough support from the administrators. Many teachers shared how they would love to build relationships with other teachers and professionals. However to build these relationships, they need structures in place and more flexibility to not just connect with colleagues, but to also to learn new tools and to implement new ideas. Teachers are hungry for authentic learning materials and excited to try new things only if they are given the space and time for it by their administrators.

**“STEM teachers need time, space, and equipment for collaboration in order to be effective.”**

3) Real life experiences in STEM

Many teachers are being forced to learn new and creative ways to engage students in STEM learning with less support than they've ever had to operate with before. It is an unprecedented challenge for teachers to share and show real life applicable experiences during virtual learning. There are no comparable replacements for field trips and hands on lessons. However, teachers acknowledged one important silver lining of this time: new opportunities to bring STEM professionals with exciting experience from the field into virtual classrooms.

**“The real life experience helps students rise to the occasion.”**