

Rethinking the American High School... In a Hybrid and Virtual World

We asserted in *Rethinking the American High School* that there are four entry points to change in American high schools: **Structures, Curriculum, Instruction, and Culture**. A year ago, we never anticipated a global pandemic would force inconceivable change upon virtually every school. While we all mourn the losses to our everyday lives, there are lessons and opportunities for every high school leader to leverage to accelerate the unending work of continuous improvement. While we still advocate for the same four entry points to change, the new climate we live in creates new ways to lead your school.

Structure



It is extremely important to provide structures to support both staff and students. When attacking learning remotely, leaders should frame the conversation with two things in mind:

- 1) *Simplicity*: Overly detailed plans and communication can result in confusion. Keep it be easy for parents, teachers, and students to understand.
- 2) *Freedom and Flexibility*: Plans should offer freedom for teachers to adapt based on their resources and style. Mandating specific tools may get in the way of teacher creativity and student learning.

Curriculum



With the structural limitations of remote or hybrid learning environments, many schools are forced to drastically reduce the curricular material. The refining of curriculum can be one of the most challenging steps to rethinking a high school's approach. This is your chance to examine and narrow the curricular focus of your school to meet the needs of your students and our new world.

Instruction



Every tool, technique, and trick we have relied upon our entire careers may be completely obsolete in our current context. There is no better time to examine the crucial aspects of learning and reflect upon the instructional methods. Additionally, this moment we are in creates the urgency needed to accelerate change that may be long overdue.

Culture



Leaders need to maintain and build a culture where everyone in the school community commits to excellence. "We are all in this together" has never been truer. Because of socially distancing, teachers must still commit to communicating with each other, whether formally through PLC groups or more informally through word of mouth. School leaders should consider setting aside time for teachers to talk about learning. Similarly, students and parents should be given opportunities to share what they are experiencing. By listening during this most difficult time we can put in place positive cultural norms that endure.

You can read more in *Rethinking the American High School: Finding Your Focus and Using Your Strengths* by Will Dwyer & Chuck Hiscock on [Amazon](#) or at [FIRST Educational Resources](#).

