Innovation: *SCS Summer 2020 University ~ Virtual Learning Edition!*

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Description: Continuous learning is an embedded process in any innovation. Staunton City Schools developed and upscaled SCS University, a collaborative peer-to-peer training that allows for personalized learning around an identified focus and need. This same concept could be applied across divisions and across innovative practices!

2020-2021 School Year:

As we navigate through the uncertainties, this is a time to come together and not pull apart.

While no one can truly predict what the remainder of this school year will bring, I can promise you we will give you our very best effort all year long. We stand ready to help all of our students have a successful and rewarding school year. We will continue to find ways to reach our students academically, socially and emotionally while trying to mitigate the effects and spread of this terrible virus. And we will come out of this difficult time stronger and better as a school division.

Dr. Garett Smith
Superintendent, Staunton City Schools

Problem of Practice:
On March 13, 2020, schools shut down abruptly for the remainder of the year. Fortunately, we had already begun an equity project on eliminating the digital divide by beginning to equip all of our secondary students with computers and hotspots for at-home use and could continue to expand that model to the elementary level.

However, as we fumbled through instruction for the remainder of Spring 2020, we realized that we needed to equip our teachers with the right instructional tools and resources to be equipped for whatever mode of learning we faced in 2020-2021. We knew that virtual learning would be the most challenging, and we wanted to do it right, so that is where we began our preparation.

In a small division of our size (about 2,700 students), how could we accomplish such a daunting task of training teachers on all of the tools and instructional strategies that might be needed to meet such a challenge? This is when *SCS Summer 2020 University ~ Virtual Edition* was created!

Intended Outcomes for Students AND Educators:
"As adults get smarter, so do our students." (Dr. Garett Smith, Superintendent)

	Educators	Students
Active learner engagement	- Navigate learning platforms for efficiency in communication, instruction, & management - Use tools to increase learning (i.e. digital total participation strategies)	- Navigate common systems to make learning more efficient - Demonstrate learning (i.e. digital total participation strategies)
Deeper learning	- Learn to integrate focus or essential standards and help deepen understandings through short and long-term performance goals/ assessments - Integrate big ideas that blends content and character (5 Cs)	- Explain key concepts with depth and understanding; apply to novel situations - Demonstrate understanding of content and model character (5 Cs)
Equity	Determine ways to reach all learners and build relationships in a variety of settings	Feel empowered, included, and heard in learning and in the educational process

Actions to Design and Implement the Innovation:
- **Staff Reflections:** Right after the emergency remote learning that occurred in Spring 2020, we asked students, families, and teachers to complete a [Reflections on Remote Learning](#) survey, which provided valuable information about preferred formats for instruction. Daily schedules and routines and use of instructional videos were preferred among families and staff for positively impacting student learning.
- **Determining Staff Strengths and Needs:** We also completed a [Needs assessment](#) for our staff to learn about specific professional development needs related to virtual learning as well as who already had proficiency with different tools and strategies.
- **Targeting Teacher Needs & Allowing for Self-Assessment:** We began offering [Summer 2020 SCS University – CV-19 Virtual Edition](#) from June 8 – July 24, 2020. We had a structure already for SCS University that was developed in 2017. However, this edition expanded our existing model. Once we selected our learning platforms, teachers could self-assess their needs. Teachers were asked to show proficiency in three required areas and used a [learning log](#) to either demonstrate or gain proficiency in these areas:
    1) Zoom or Google Meet
    2) Remind App
    3) SeeSaw (Grades K-2) or Google Classroom (Grades 3-12) (Some 6-12 classrooms will use Canvas/ Virtual Virginia.)
- **Personal Choice:** There were other options that helped teachers increase proficiency in virtual learning settings. These are organized by the following five categories:
    - Overview – Best practices and structures for virtual learning
    - Building positive relationships and supporting students
    - Providing direct and explicit instruction
    - Gathering formative assessment
    - Differentiating instruction

    These sessions were all optional for teachers, so they could choose to participate in sessions that met their own needs.
- **Collaborative and Flexible:** The courses were all online, collaborative sessions taught by teachers and administrators within

our division. In total, we offered 24 different courses (35 sessions), with an average of 59 participants per session. In addition, all of the session materials, including recordings, presentations, and resources were posted onto our online SCS Instruction site so that teachers could also access them independently. Teachers logged over 10,000 hours of professional learning time!
- Below are a few examples of courses offered:
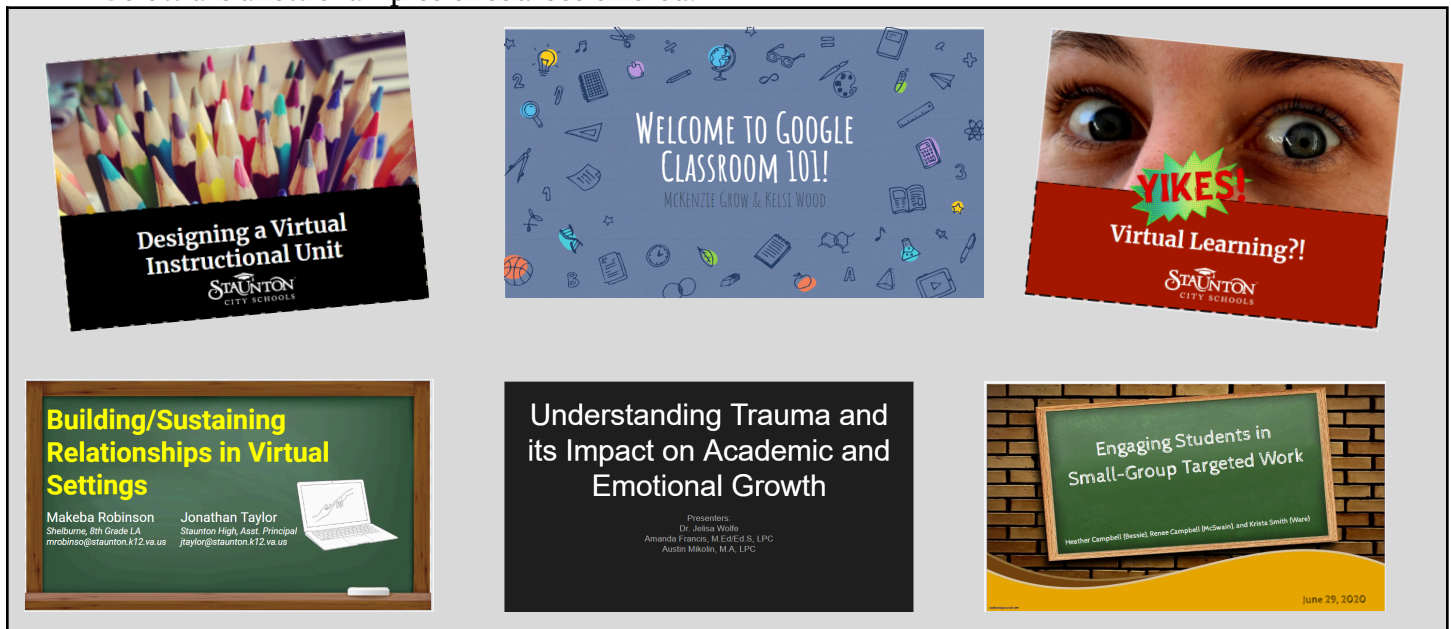
This information may also be found on our school website and is linked in our SCS Instructional Plan.

Impact of Actions on Intended Outcomes:
- Check out slides 8-10 of a City Council presentation, where teachers reflect on the importance of relationships, instruction, and family support at the start of the year!
- The best way to determine the impact of the peer-to-peer training was to see it in action! We modified and tweaked our model of observations to include Virtual Observations. We developed a teacher version to help them understand the purpose and administrator version with links to schedules, etc. The virtual observations demonstrated that teachers had developed much proficiency with keeping lessons focused on the most important concept and keeping students engaged. They had all learned to be huge multi-taskers, which wouldn't have been possible without a proficiency in skills. Most importantly, we saw evidence of students learning!
- Overall student data has varied across the various levels in the division, based on a variety of factors. There have been some areas where we have been able to maintain relatively similar performance, despite the different learning modes and multitude of other factors surrounding the pandemic.

Plans for Next Steps:
- **Cycle of Fall, Spring, and Summer SCS University:** This is a model that can be replicated for future focus areas. For example, this upcoming spring/ summer, our focus will be on re-alignment of our curriculum to support a full-day in-person learning model, to the extent possible. The key is helping staff see a need and a connection!
- SCS Student University: Just as we've offered SCS University for staff, this Summer 2021, we decided to name our extended summer learning similarly -- SCS STUDENT University. The students are a part of the learning team!

Want to Learn More?
Be sure to check out our SCS University video summary!