



HOW WE ARE ALL LEARNING TOGETHER, APART

By Michele Malejki, Global Head of Sustainability & Social Impact Programs, HP Inc.



Practically overnight, millions of parents and caretakers around the world have assumed a second role as homeschool teachers. As the COVID-19 pandemic sent shockwaves through the global education system, distance learning quickly became the norm with [9 out of 10 children](#) now out of school worldwide and educational institutions closed in all 50 U.S. states.

Amid this unprecedented disruption, it's been inspiring to witness the resiliency and creativity of parents, teachers and students as they test and learn new ways of recreating the classroom. But to say this transition has been difficult would be an understatement. Parents and educators have been left without proper resources and scrambling to figure out how to create learning environments in their own homes. What's more, an even brighter spotlight has been cast on the educational disparities as many families [can't afford](#) home internet service and, in many cities, [libraries are temporarily closing](#).

Admirably, many technology vendors have sprung to action. Adobe, Cisco, Coursera, Microsoft, Scholastic, Google, LogMeIn, Zoom and HP have all offered solutions aimed at making it easier for coursework to continue as planned. At HP, we're also empowering the business community to help donate PCs to families in need. But we understand that it's about more than providing technology, it's also about providing access.

Education is a Fundamental Human Right

HP's vision is to create technology that makes life better for everyone, everywhere. It's why we have always viewed education as a human right. To that end, it has been a long-term goal of ours to enable better learning outcomes for 100 million people by 2025.

We've invested more than \$20 million in philanthropic activities and donations of critical computing gear—such as laptops and printers—to the schools and students needing them the most. HP and [its employees](#) were doing this even before the coronavirus outbreak because we believe in doing good in the communities in which we do business.

We also recognized that students from low-income families could be left behind if they attend schools that depend on computers and internet connections for course work. A 2018 [Pew Research study](#), for example, found nearly one in five teens couldn't finish their homework because of this "digital divide." And approximately [21 million to 42 million](#) Americans do not have access to home broadband networks, according to various public and private studies. This shouldn't be acceptable even under normal circumstances. With so many students now homeschooling, extending access to technology and tools has become even more vital.

Industry-wide, we also need to provide valuable supplements to the educational content schools are providing. A recent [Gallup poll](#) found that even though 70 percent of parents say their children are enrolled in distance learning programs run by their schools, 42 percent remain concerned about the potential negative impact on their kids' educations. As a result, online searches for "free learning websites for kids" jumped 1,350 percent in March, according to a Google Trends search.

Extending Access to e-Learning Skills

It's encouraging to see companies working quickly to address this increased appetite for quality educational material and helping to educate teachers and parents, alike, on how to stand up functional digital learning environments.

Common Sense Media, in collaboration with National Geographic, PBS, Scholastic, Sesame Street, Time4Kids, Apple, Comcast, Google, Salesforce and Zoom launched [Wide Open School](#), a resource for parents educating kids at home. Meanwhile, HP, Crayola, Education.com, TIME for Kids, Scholastic, and Canva have launched a free online resource called [Print, Play & Learn](#) that will allow students to access a variety of valuable worksheets, coloring pages, puzzles and other amazing "printables" alongside their formal homeschooling curriculum.

HP has also announced Turn to Learn – teaming up with companies like Britannica, TIME for Kids and NASA to deliver educational content curated from leading scientific, publishing and media companies to support teachers and students in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. HP is partnering with TIME for Kids, Britannica and NASA on the program, which will focus on providing critical resources to Title I school districts and underserved students across the United States. HP also announced a series of school district donations, partnerships and new blended learning programs globally to respond to COVID-19. We also announced \$8M in products and grants globally to help drive educational outcomes.

Even when schools and students are able to acquire foundational e-learning tools and technology, a sizable portion aren't adequately prepared to deploy them. In fact, an Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development ([OECD](#)) survey found only three out of five teachers polled in 2018 had received training on how to use their classroom technology. This is why we recently launched a program called [HP BeOnline](#). A collaboration with Mirai Learning School and Classera, BeOnline gives schools access to a wealth of information on how to establish comprehensive remote learning environments.

It's always difficult to predict the future and plan ahead. During this crisis, hundreds of companies and individuals are racing to make distance learning succeed. That work should continue even after this pandemic subsides. We're all in this together, and we should not assume this will be the last time remote education will be necessary. The technology and tools exist to make this an ongoing option. For our part, HP will continue to work towards a future where technology makes life better for everyone, everywhere.