Recently, we discussed the policy and budget work being done in Washington to help financially support students and teachers during their return to in-person classes. But, there is another side to that conversation: how will the intersection of technology, mental health, and education look going forward?

Mental health problems can affect many areas of students' lives, including their [academic achievement](). With the switch to remote learning this past year, many students felt cooped up and isolated in their homes from a lack of social interactions. The online school format allowed students to fall into the habit of taking classes from their beds, requiring not much more than opening a laptop in order to attend. But, the preCOVID-19 busy schedule typical of a well-rounded student, bouncing from studying to sports to clubs to friends, reflects someone that lives a healthy patterned life - by going remote, the new format got rid of many motivations of both teachers and students and made school feel overwhelming.

In a post-covid world, students are currently projected to have increased long-term anxiety, substance abuse, and hyperactivity - which adds even more stress and less time for teachers to relax as they deserve these next few years, recovering from this past year while trying to learn the best ways to move forward and integrate technology back *into* the classroom. According to [EdWeek.Org](), "One of the best predictors of how our children are going to do is based on how we're doing as their parents and caregivers [teachers], and the pandemic has not left anyone un-stressed." The pandemic has left teachers feeling tired during class by an increased amount of 36%, distracted by anxieties, worries, or fears by 29%, and feeling sad throughout the school day by 16%. So how can we improve the current mental health crisis for both students and teachers? We can start by equipping teachers to understand and identify mental health issues in their students through more collaborative learning efforts - and for districts to make the academic learning process emphasize mental health a priority.

Looking forward to in-person learning, we need to apply a brand new perspective switch regarding how we look at technology in our classrooms. The technology is no longer *the* classrooms, it is back to being *in* classrooms. While technology acting as the classroom led to isolation, it's presence post-pandemic had 92% of teachers reporting that the internet has a major impact on their ability to access content, resources, and materials to improve the in-classroom experience. The pandemic technology also helped teachers to allow for students to perform at their own pace, finding lessons that better fit the student's speed and easier ways for them to collaborate. This concept is similar to project-based learning - giving students opportunities to work closer together and more creatively. The technology approach, when met with project-based learning, can help teachers to connect further with their students. These connections can make their students feel like they have another environment to turn to their teachers regarding their anxieties, fears, issues at home, or any further support educators provide.

A project-based learning approach would be the best way to bring technology back into the classroom. It can rebuild the mental health of your students while instilling the connection and collaboration efforts that may have been lost while technology had to serve as the classroom.

This connection can and will improve the mental health and relationships between teachers and students - making a lasting impression on the future of your district.

If this is something your district has questions about or wants to schedule a professional development session to implement it at your school - don't hesitate to reach out! We are happy to help and answer any and all questions you may have!