



CONSORTIUM
OF FLORIDA EDUCATION
FOUNDATIONS



COVID Education Innovation in Florida

Distance Learning Helpline (Miami-Dade County)

In preparation for school closures in March 2020, 42,000 devices were deployed to students unfamiliar with basic computer troubleshooting and how to gain access to the electronic applications they would need to use for instruction continuity. A help desk staffed by Miami-Dade County Public Schools content-area and IT experts was created to help students and families with the transition to a fully digital and virtual learning environment. The Distance Learning Helpline provided assistance in English, Spanish and Haitian-Creole, so many parents in the community, who are recent immigrants, benefited from this support. Families were also offered information on internet access and hotspot locations provided to low-income families by internet service providers. Information about device or food distribution sites in the school system was also available.

First set up as a traditional call center, when safety measures required staff to physically distance, the program transitioned to a remote center system, randomly assigning calls out based on availability and caller language preference. Microsoft Teams was used as the hub to ask questions and take a “swarm” approach to solving callers’ specific problems.

Through the District’s already existing Digital Convergence program, teachers could access on-demand workshops to support and guide them in the transition to a fully virtual classroom environment. These sessions were chunked and sequenced to not overwhelm the teachers and provided them with a scaffolded approach that could be accessed 24/7 and reviewed at any time. In the summer of 2020, district staff began promoting open office hours that allowed teachers to pop in, using video conferencing applications, and ask an instructional technology or curriculum support specialist any question or request a demonstration. This organic, PLC-like environment was the seed for schools to rely on and develop internal teacher leaders and support sessions in order to share best practices.

The Distance Learning Helpline was designed to be a low tech, first line of support for teachers, students, and families. As of April 2021, with about 50% of families electing to continue distance learning, it is still operational and has taken more than 56,000 calls.

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Other Resources:

[M-DCPS Distance Learning Site](#)

The Consortium elevates the impact of Florida’s local education foundations through advocacy and providing a collegial community for ongoing learning, shared resources and support. These nonprofit organizations are aligned with nearly every school district in our state and collectively they raise more than \$80 million annually to innovate learning, power potential and celebrate success.

We believe strong collaboration is essential to ensure school success. Our effort to capture, elevate and share education innovations discovered amid the disruption of the pandemic is offered in that spirit.

Our **Top 10 Takeaways: COVID Education Innovation** report can be accessed at educationinnovationspotlight.com