We provide K-12 Leadership with our partner districts to achieve their educational technology goals. The LHRIC – we are there! The LHRIC – helps you meet your ed tech goals! The LHRIC – Your partners in Ed Tech.
Hindsight is 2020! While the origin of that statement is unclear, it has never been truer than when we look back at the 2020-2021 TLI program.

When we launched the TLI program last fall, it was unclear how it would unfold. It ended up being a comprehensive virtual series with a collection of events scattered across the year, showcasing subject matter experts, local educators, and the celebration of talents and learning from across the region.

This “Year in Review” retrospective is for all of us – for us to remember some of the bright spots, to inform those who couldn’t attend, and to simply serve as an artifact from a memorable academic year!

Enjoy this curation of stories!
We look forward to seeing you in 2021-2022!

Sincerely,
The LHRIC Family
LHRIC’s TLI program offers our districts the opportunity to come together to learn about, share ideas on, and discuss excellence in teaching and learning through technology.

Our efforts each year are formed by our ability to expand upon our connections with vendors to allow you to experience new technologies and how they have impacted teaching and learning. Several events will bring in many new and established vendors to help you plan out and realize your vision for your school district.

Participation in these member-only events gives you the best opportunity to stay abreast of the rapidly changing landscape of technology and education. The goal of the TLI Leadership Series is to bring national conferences, topics and discussions to local venues. We continually engage with renowned keynote speakers from our field who are thought-provoking and inspiring. Network with peers on topics that are of the utmost importance and interest to you as a school or district leader.
October’s headline speaker was Janelle Shane, an optics research scientist, artificial intelligence researcher, writer and public speaker. She discussed artificial intelligence – its pros and cons, and what to watch out for when using it.

“What do we mean when we say AI, and what questions do we need to ask?” said Ms. Shane. “We have a lot of choice already about what AI we choose to use, what AI we choose not to use at all and how much we trust it.”

Ms. Shane noted that the vast population already uses several types of artificial intelligence – from photo filters and voicemail transcription software to test proctoring and background checks. Nevertheless, artificial intelligence still needs improvement to perform at its best.

“I can perform well if the user gives it specific tasks, she said. For example, Ms. Shane found that if artificial intelligence is asked for something broad – like photos of cats on the internet – it will share items that are cat-adjacent but not always directly respond to what was asked. In her research, this

“AI often has to rely on human rescue. We’re still at the point where you’re going to have to monitor your supposedly self-driving car.”

—Janelle Shane

included doctored photos that featured cats with non-cat tails, a mix of cartoon and lifelike animals and other cats with strange modifications.

“It’s super important to know what AI can handle and what it can’t,” Ms. Shane said. “The narrower the task you give it, the smarter the AI is going to be. If it’s super broad, you won’t get a good image.”

Despite the continual improvements made to artificial intelligence, it cannot always handle a full task and may require human help. Ms. Shane shared that AI was asked to solve a Rubik’s Cube but still needed assistance by a person because it could not completely perform the task alone.

“AI often has to rely on human rescue,” Ms. Shane said. “We’re still at the point where you’re going to have to monitor your supposedly self-driving car.”

Additionally, artificial intelligence sometimes takes shortcuts without realizing, Ms. Shane said. In her research, she used a photo taken on Scotland’s bucolic Isle of Skye, which contained several sheep. Artificial intelligence’s auto-generated caption tagged the sheep correctly. However, when she removed the sheep from the photo, it incorrectly tagged the sheep as if they were still in the photo.

Ms. Shane performed an experiment with the tagging generator, watching how or if the tags would change. She discovered that the sheep, when painted orange, were tagged as flowers; when put in trees, were tagged as birds; and when brought inside or picked up by a person, were tagged as cats or dogs.

“The AI was correct a lot of the time but it was only correct on certain types of pictures,” she said. “It was taking a shortcut. AI can sometimes think it is doing its job when it’s actually incorrect.”

As artificial intelligence continues to expand and spread, its users must be vigilant to ensure that it performs its tasks correctly and solves the right problems. “We should probably never trust an AI without checking its work,” Ms. Shane said.

“It seems that artificial intelligence is just an infant,” said Ms. Martabano of the LHRIC. “Will it ever be independent, or will it always need monitoring?”

Ms. Shane explained that despite the progress that artificial intelligence has made so far, it needs to focus on specific tasks to fully succeed. Specific tasks, like playing chess, can be completed. However, a broader task, like monitoring comments on social media, cannot be completed at this stage in its development.

“It’s going to be a while before AI is able to successfully complete a broad problem,” she said. “We may not get there in the next few decades because that requires a lot of understanding. Regarding AI becoming more human-like, I don’t think we’re going to get there during our lifetimes.”
When schools across the country turned to remote learning this spring due to the pandemic, educators wondered if students would have the same access to technology at home as they did while at school. It turned out that the Digital Divide was much larger than expected.

Beth Holland, a leader and researcher of digital equity, was the headline speaker for the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center’s November TLI Virtual Keynote. Dr. Holland shared her presentation “Digital Equity in a COVID World: Beyond the Basic Requirements of Devices and Internet” and emphasized how educators can best create an environment that ensures that all learners have access to an education that meets all of their needs.

“All means all,” Dr. Holland said. “There has always been a notion of designing to (the kids in) the middle. But how do we focus on those edges? What’s good for the (kids on the) edges is probably going to be good for the middle.”

On Nov. 13, the LHRIC welcomed educators from around the Hudson Valley to listen to and participate in discussion on a subject that is a prevailing issue in the current state of remote learning and online instruction.

When Kathy Conley, the LHRIC’s Executive Director, was a principal in the 1990s, equity was an issue that concerned her and her colleagues. As technology became more prevalent, she assumed that “if we could put technology in the hands of children anytime, anywhere, this could close the gap. But it wasn’t the silver bullet that I had hoped for.”

As the years passed, the Digital Divide still has not closed. Nearly 16 million students currently lack sufficient access to the internet to support their remote learning, and nine million of those students also lack access to a laptop, tablet or computer, said Dr. Holland.

In addition, a majority of those students identify as Black, Indigenous or a Person of Color who lives in a rural or underserved community.

The pandemic has also underscored the fact that some students do not have the same digital access at home as they did in school and that there is a massive disparity between different communities. However, the recent necessity of remote instruction due to coronavirus has highlighted where those gaps are.

“How do we give our students what they need? One size doesn’t fit all. Fair isn’t equal.”

—Dr. Beth Holland

“If there’s something positive (that has come from this), we now want to make sure that all of our students have access,” said Dr. Holland, noting that the gap’s visibility means that districts can now attempt to close it. She also added that having access correlates to educational achievement.

Ensuring that a child has a device does not necessarily mean that he/she/they knows how to use it. In addition, while a district having a 1:1 program is a step in the right direction, it is not the definition of digital equity.

“Our kids are technology comfortable, they’re not technology savvy,” said Dr. Holland, adding that children are comfortable pushing buttons and playing; however, educators need to continue guiding them and giving purpose to their device-led work. She encouraged “building digital dexterity” and developing “technology literate” students.

“It’s not about teaching them one tool or one program,” she continued, “but the dexterity to navigate between them.”

Several questions were posed for educators to consider: What if the tools that a child needs aren’t available at home? What if the tools that they prefer are not valued or allowed in class? What if we don’t know what we don’t know?

“As technology leaders, we can give our kids the tools that they need to be expert learners,” said Dr. Holland, who also touched on the need for female depictions and multiculturalism for students to see themselves represented in their learning. “How do we give our students what they need? One size doesn’t fit all. Fair isn’t equal.”

Looking ahead to post-pandemic times, Dr. Holland commented that some students are thriving in a remote setting.

Returning to school full-time may not work for them, she said. For some students, school is a place of trauma caused by issues like anxiety disorders and bullying problems.

“We can help change the ecosystem in which our students learn,” she said, emphasizing the importance of always knowing what is driving the use of the technology that students are using. “How can we help shape the new normal?”

Readers are encouraged to view curated resources and readings that have been specifically created for this event by Dr. Holland: http://brholland.com/lhric2020/

“Thank you for inspiring our thinking on the topic of digital equity,” Sarah Martabano, Education Technology Manager at the LHRIC, said to Dr. Holland. “We always love having this conversation and will continue to have it.”
TLI ATTENDEE FEEDBACK

Feedback from October / Janelle Shane
“Unique content that I have not seen a lot about.”

Feedback from November / Dr. Holland
“The keynote speaker and article were intriguing.
It was good food for thought.”

Feedback from December / Catlin Tucker
“It was very detailed and also took into considerations many of the pitfalls we all experience with blended learning, as well as provide accessible solutions.”

Feedback from January / Carl Hooker
“The keynote message was excellent! He was a great speaker and shared concrete examples. He modeled a number of ways to keep people involved in a virtual presentation. He made me think.”

Feedback from Active=Con / Dr. Robert Dillon
“Bob’s presentation was very inspiring. He does a great job pinpointing the key issues we need to focus on.”
Blended learning offers strategies for teachers to excel in the concurrent classroom

Keynote: Dr. Catlin Tucker

Teachers are spending more time than ever in the role of “designer,” being the architect of their students’ learning experiences. Meanwhile, they must also fill the roles of instructor and facilitator, said blended learning and online learning expert Catlin Tucker.

When teachers rely exclusively on a teacher-led “whole group” model, the challenges of teaching in a concurrent classroom are exacerbated, said Dr. Tucker, a bestselling author, international trainer and Google Certified Innovator. However, there are strategies that educators can implement to combat these challenges.

As the author of a collection of books on blended learning, Dr. Tucker was the featured presenter at the latest Virtual Keynote Series event on Dec. 9.

“Teachers really need to hear from their leadership that less is more” in order for them to be able to engage students in deep, rigorous learning, Dr. Tucker told nearly 150 attendees during the online event. While that learning may not be broad, “that doesn’t mean that there can’t be depth,” she said.

In Dr. Tucker’s address, titled “Using Blended Learning Models to Design for and Facilitate Learning in a Concurrent Classroom,” she spoke of four key challenges that teachers face in the virtual and hybrid learning environments.

1. Managing students in two learning landscapes
2. Inequality of teacher attention
3. Lack of student engagement
4. Not enough time to connect with individuals or small groups of learners

Her recommended remedy to solve these issues is to give students greater control over the time, place, pace and path of their learning. She offered a series of practical and substantive ideas about how to accomplish that.

With regard to teaching students both remotely and in-person, Dr. Tucker suggested creating an interactive agenda that all students can access and developing a welcome routine at the start of each class.

To counter inequality of teacher attention, she suggested various rotating learning stations, which offer several benefits, including allowing students to control the pace of their learning.

“Choice is a really powerful motivator, and we all know that students don’t always enjoy the same tasks.”

— Dr. Catlin Tucker

Regarding student engagement, Dr. Tucker posed a question to her audience: What engages students? She invited attendees to share their answers. The real-time results informed an interactive word cloud that featured responses like “interest,” “fun,” “interaction,” “connection,” “movement” and “games.”

She suggested using a choice board, a graphic organizer that allows students to choose different ways to learn about a particular concept. In addition to being fun for students, it can help teachers to drill down on specific skills and standards.

“Choice is a really powerful motivator,” Dr. Tucker said, “and we all know that students don’t always enjoy the same tasks.”

A choice board offers a series of activities that students navigate through, which shifts the control of the pace of learning from teachers to students.

In response to educators not having enough time to connect with learners individually, she suggested using the “Playlist Model.” With playlists, teachers can differentiate the path of student learning and create clarity about the work’s trajectory so that children can continue to make progress. Teachers can also fuse media, modalities, online and offline work, and build in check-ins with students, which are essential for receiving and giving feedback.

Dr. Tucker offered sage advice to those striving for success in a concurrent classroom. Think big, start small and embrace a “less is more” mentality, she counseled. She recommended that the attendees create clear channels of communication, prioritize relationships and make time to connect with students.

She suggested that educators design learning experiences, which put students at the center of learning, and to use blended learning models to differentiate learning experiences.

At the end of her engaging lecture, Dr. Tucker asked participants to be compassionate with themselves: “Remember that we are all learning right now,” she said. “Be patient with yourself.”

Dr. Tucker is the author of several educational books, including “Blended Learning in Grades 4-12,” “Blended Learning In Action,” “Power Up Blended Learning” and “Balance With Blended Learning.” She is also active on Twitter (@Catlin_Tucker) and writes an internationally ranked education blog at CatlinTucker.com.

TLI VIRTUAL KEYNOTE SERIES DECEMBER
Technology Educator Encourages Teachers to Create Experiences, Take Risks in Classroom

Keynote: Carl Hooker

Written by Cara Matthews, SWBOCES

Challenging, exhausting, eye-opening and long. Those are some words that participants in educator Carl Hooker’s interactive keynote address used to describe their lives since the COVID-19 pandemic began.

But, despite the unprecedented times, the past 10 months have also been enlightening and full of opportunities for those same participants. Educators in the Hudson Valley were engaged with Mr. Hooker’s presentation, “Reboot 2021,” which was the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center’s offering of its TLIVirtual Keynote Series on Jan. 29.

“There is opportunity for change,” said Mr. Hooker, a K-12 education consultant and former Director of Innovation and Digital Learning for the Eanes Independent School District in Austin, Texas.

With virtual learning, it is often difficult for students and teachers to connect on screen, and there is not much time for children to interact with one another. Methods of learning that can assist with student engagement are the use of polls, interactive activities and allowing children to spend time in breakout rooms. Mr. Hooker offered examples during “Reboot 2021” by conducting thought-provoking polls and even allowing participants to choose the ending of his presentation.

“It’s not about teaching a lesson – it’s about creating experiences,” he said. To illustrate, he recalled a colleague who engaged teenage students during a lesson about women’s suffrage by bringing in a burned bra.

“It got kids to lean in.”

Educators need to encourage children to take risks and potentially fail. “We need to be OK if kids get questions wrong,” said Mr. Hooker. “Not every answer is in the back of a textbook. Not every answer in life is going to be that way.”

Teachers also need to take risks and be creative: “It would be easy for me to repeat the same thing I taught for 25 years,” he said. “It’s a lot harder for me to try something new – like a poll, a Padlet wall or something digital – that I’ve never done before. A lot of us are all out of our comfort zone right now.”

Mr. Hooker showed a photo of his three daughters, the youngest of whom will graduate high school in 2031. “Think about what’s changed in the last 10 years of our lives and how much it’s going to change for them in the future,” he said, noting that his eldest daughter has not lived in a world without smartphones.

Technology will continue to have a massive impact on education, Mr. Hooker said. Ten years ago, few schools had robots; now, even elementary schools have robots like Spheros and Ozobots to learn coding. Over the past year, the pandemic has accelerated the pace of change and innovation.

“It’s a big disruption and we had to have this big shift that’s happened to us,” said Mr. Hooker, who has worked in education for 22 years.

He shared data from the 2020 World Economic Forum, which predicted that more than half of all jobs will be automated in four years’ time. “If we know that there’s this automation of low-level tasks, what should we teach our students to make them stand out above the robots?” he asked. Participants contributed answers like grit, resiliency, collaborative skills, creativity, problem-solving, patience, adaptability, critical thinking, empathy and the ability to innovate.

Mr. Hooker asked participants what educational practices that were implemented due to COVID-19 should be kept after the pandemic. Responses included the virtual-learning option, 1:1 technology devices, more convenient parent-teacher meetings and a full day of planning each week for teachers. Mr. Hooker also asked which practices should be thrown out; answers included low-level learning, digital worksheets, chalk-and-talk, drill-and-kill, and being slaves to the bell schedule.

While many practices are not often controlled by teachers, there are some that they have the power to change on their own in their classrooms.

At the end of Mr. Hooker’s lecture, he asked participants to select the “red pill” or the “blue pill,” allowing them to choose the ending of his presentation. The group favored the “red pill,” which prompted Mr. Hooker to discuss a virtual travel experience that he gave an infirm aunt who was unable to travel. He said that life as an educator is a 24/7 job and involves providing education not only for students, but also for family members, friends and neighbors.

In addition to encouraging risk-taking and allowing failure, “we need to make sure that we’re creating a generation of empathetic risk-takers,” Mr. Hooker said. “It’s not just about taking those risks and failing. It’s about why we are doing it, why it is important and who’s on the other side of that screen.”

For those who were interested, Mr. Hooker provided a link for participants to view the “blue pill” ending of his presentation. He spoke about the time that his former kindergarten students fondly recalled classroom experiences years later on social media. One thing they mentioned was when the class turned the room into a habitat and students dressed up as animals. They did not talk about reading tests or math worksheets.

“The key to relationships is trust and connection,” said Mr. Hooker.
TLI Explores Creating Healthy Learning Spaces

Keynote: Dr. Robert Dillon

Written by Natalia Baage-Lord, SWBOCES

The goal of much of Robert Dillon’s work is to expand the definition of what a “healthy building” means. Most school buildings are conceptually designed for learning, but not for health, he said. His hopes are to broaden how buildings are constructed and to transition to a model that focuses on the health and wellness of students, staff members and any residents who enter.

“People want children to be in healthy buildings, but we need to expand its definition,” said Dr. Dillon, a longtime educator and thought leader who has served as teacher, principal and director of innovation. “The health of students and educators – both physical and emotional – are impacted by where they learn and teach. There’s an academic prowess to having a healthy building.”

On Feb. 26, Dr. Dillon was the engaging keynote speaker at the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center’s Technology Leadership Institute Active-Con 2021. His presentation, “Designing Learning Spaces for Health and Wellness,” discussed emerging trends, why issues of space and wellness are currently magnified, and what it means to be in a healthy building.

“This keynote feels like it’s coming from a friend rather than a professional resource,” said Leslie Accardo, the LHRIC’s Model Schools coordinator, about Dr. Dillon. “He’s the patron saint of active learning in our region.”

Educating during a pandemic has been challenging on many levels. From a logistical standpoint, it has made it apparent that both students and staff members benefit from being in an environment that optimizes academic achievement and prioritizes effectiveness for teaching and learning.

“We’ve learned so much during this pandemic about what we can and can’t do in regard to physical spaces,” Dr. Dillon said.

His research illustrated that when choice and agency were increased, it resulted in greater joy and engagement for students, which ultimately set them up for success.

Several school districts have seen the value of creating healthy buildings. A popular trend is creating wellness centers on campuses, which Dr. Dillon remarked is more beneficial than having a “calm down room” or “quarantine room.” Wellness centers “help us think long-term about what it means to be in a healthy building,” he said.

Another commonly implemented trend is focusing on outdoor learning. While it may look different across the nation, “its benefits are vast – outdoor learning means that we can get kids outside, which holds many health benefits,” said Dr. Dillon, stressing the importance of acquiring Vitamin D from sunshine and connecting with the real world.

Other trends include performing a building analysis to ensure that all available space is being used optimally; creating a hybrid campus, especially for secondary school students, which allows for virtual learning; the rise of e-sports; and the implementation of “learning coaches,” rather than teachers, as a way to deal with faculty shortages.

Dr. Dillon applauded these healthy learning space trends but cautioned districts against spending money on them if they “aren’t in sync with your instructional practices,” he said. “It’s important that they all fit together.” Focusing on the reasoning behind implementing any change will ensure the space’s betterment.

“My hope is that every building reduces the stress of teachers and learners,” Dr. Dillon said. “My hope is that when we design a space, we get to a point where they are happy, energized, comfortable, thoughtful and relaxed.”

Dr. Dillon continued to say that if educators use those markers as their “north star,” it will lead their district to success. In addition, success can be measured by students and teachers feeling a sense of belonging in their schools, and the sustainability for future generations to continue enjoying the space.

“You don’t have to go from A to Z tomorrow, but we want to continually move forward with this,” he said.

“You make something that seems so huge and transcendent seem doable,” Ms. Accardo said.
Reflective Keynote Speaker Helps Educators Find “The Way Forward”

Keynote: Janell Burley Hofmann

Written by Alicia Smith, SWBOCES

In Janell Burley Hofmann’s keynote presentation during the TELL Awards ceremony, educators had the opportunity to pause and reflect on the past year from a professional and personal standpoint. On March 16, Ms. Burley Hofmann – a consultant, author and founder of the Slow Tech Movement – led an interactive discussion with participants about what they learned during the COVID-19 pandemic where they were one year ago and what made them realize the pandemic’s significance. She shared that, for her, it was the concern over whether her oldest child, who was visiting friends overseas, would be able to return home.

Using Zoom’s chat feature, educators shared their thoughts. They wrote about when a relative contracted the virus, annual plans were canceled, grocery store shelves were emptied, schools turned remote indefinitely and the necessity to stay home.

“I hold all of you and your experiences in my heart as we think about this,” Ms. Burley Hofmann said.

She asked what the similarities and differences between their stories were and how they could learn from each other. This discussion was called “a point of connection and validation.”

Attendees also shared meaningful losses over the past year, including the loss of holiday traditions, family time, laughter, hugs, hallway conversations at work, and a sense of safety and innocence.

“That’s a lot of loss that deserves to be recognized and called forward,” Ms. Burley Hofmann said. With a smile, she added: “I am taking you on a road to positivity.”

Ms. Burley Hofmann then turned the focus to what educators can “bring forward” with them into a future post-pandemic world. As an example, she said that she wants to “develop comfort or welcome vulnerability in being alone,” as well as concentrate on tasks that give her a feeling of meaningfulness.

Participants shared that they hope to do more social and emotional check-ins with themselves and their family members; connect with colleagues more often; live each day to the fullest; show compassion and find the best in their students; and stop saying ‘go back to normal.’

“You said it more beautifully than I ever could,” Ms. Burley Hofmann noted.

“We need to hold onto the idea of ‘the way forward’ – it embodies the past, regenerates and grows from it.”

— Janell Burley Hofmann
Outstanding TEACHER

Michelle Ifill-Roseau
Teacher
White Plains Public Schools

Danielle Kennis
Special Education Social Studies Teacher
Clarkstown CSD

Anthony Rich
Elementary Technology Teacher
Eastchester UFSD

Outstanding LEADER

Kristie Bangali
Instructional Technology Specialist 6-12
Rye City School District

Michael Hanna
Director of Technology
Ossining UFSD

Felipe Orozco
Director for ELL and Bilingual Services
Port Chester Public Schools

Outstanding PARTNER

Union Free School District of the Tarrytowns
Moving forward as the pandemic recedes requires a balance between the threat response that was required and the opportunity mindset needed for the future, says author and researcher Michael Horn. Addressing the most recent TLI Keynote Speaker Series event, Mr. Horn said that opportunities are exciting but they may not stir the sense of urgency—or the allocation of resources—that threats do. Threat response alone, however, isn’t enough.

“If you just frame it as a threat, while it marshals a lot of resources, we just hunker down and double down on things we’ve always done,” he said during his April 30 virtual presentation, titled “Using Blended Learning to Personalize.”

Mr. Horn warned of what researchers call a “threat rigidity complex.” Tackling the threat then reframing it as an opportunity lets you tackle new challenges. Organizations get locked in, however, because their value proposition leads them to orient their resources and processes in ways that aren’t easily adapted.

When a new idea doesn’t fit, either the initiative is rejected or it is twisted to fit the needs of the organization, “not the students or stakeholders for whom it was initially designed.”

Instead, he advised, leaders need to create teams not already tasked with pursuing the usual value proposition and have them look beyond threat response and toward opportunities.

“It’s important to create space and time for people to think about that intentionality that’s needed,” he said, to think not just about what fall will look like but also the end of the school year, and three years from now. Aspirational thinking leads to a lofty vision that guides your planning, he said.

To do all that, however, requires starting with the end goal in mind.

“What are we trying to accomplish, and how would we know we’ve been successful?” he said of the questions that must be at the fore. “What’s the ‘why?’”

**“To me, any use of technology should really be intentional.”**

— Michael Horn

For schools, the purpose is producing critical thinkers and contributors to society who are prepared to achieve lifelong success. In Mr. Horn’s view, five things need to be assured this fall: health and safety, intentional culture and connection, assessment, personalization and technology infrastructure.

Mr. Horn speaks and writes about the future of education and is the author of “Choosing College” and “Goodnight Box,” a children’s story. He has co-authored several books, white papers and articles, including the award-winning “Disrupting Class: How Disruptive Innovation Will Change the Way the World Learns” and the Amazon-bestseller “Blended: Using Disruptive Innovation to Improve Schools.”

Over the course of his address, Mr. Horn offered concrete suggestions for teachers implementing blended learning in their classrooms, including such models as lab rotation, flipped classrooms, individual rotation, a la carte, enriched virtual and station rotation. Of that last model, he said that “it gives teachers way more time to be active.”

Combining models is important, too, in order to unlock opportunity. The best use of face-to-face time is not lecturing or passive learning, he said, it’s allowing teachers to facilitate rich socratic discussions, evaluate work, and mentor and counsel students.

With technology, he advised his audience not to look for silver bullets. No technology works in all circumstances. It should provide rapid, actionable feedback, enable previously unattainable experiences, and provide transparency for teachers and productivity gains while enabling active learning.

“The research is incredibly clear about the importance of active learning,” he said.

“To me, any use of technology should really be intentional,” he added.

In one example, Mr. Horn explained how an ice cream chain once tried to sort out how to boost milkshake sales. They polled customers, to little effect. Instead, they closely observed customer behavior. To their surprise—and the TLI audience’s horror—the morning commute saw the height of milkshake sales and the biggest opportunity for growth.

The takeaway: be observant, see what’s working and ask the right questions to gather the data needed to frame a sound plan.

The event’s second half featured a presentation on what’s next in blending learning, LHRIC Senior Facilitator Randy Hall, Adult Learning Facilitator Diane Cunningham, Ed.D., and Hyde Park Schools Deputy Superintendent Gregory Brown, Ed.D. offered “Lessons Learned from 3 Perspectives.” Their presentation featured participant engagement on the topics of “Reimagining Our When & Where,” “Weaving It All Together” and “Making Learning Relevant & Authentic.”
Manoush Zomorodi is OK if audience members found themselves bored during her keynote address. The kickoff presenter at Tech Expo 2021 was anything but boring. She has engaged audiences from NPR’s Ted Hour and her own podcasts like Zig Zag to countless events like this one, held on a sunny Friday afternoon in May before a virtual crowd of 120 or so educators.

Seriously, though, she’s OK if anyone was bored. These days, she has found that boredom is not only a good thing, it’s invaluable and in short supply. Like a lot of us, Ms. Zomorodi says she was taught early on that only boring people are bored. But as she found herself staring at her phone all day, busy but not engaged, she began to wonder if all the tiny moments in her day, the little cracks between tasks, were gone, replaced by endless scrolling and tapping. That got her thinking hard about being bored.

“What happens in our brains when we get bored anyway?” she wondered, reflecting on the Bored and Brilliant project that later became a book title. Neuroscientists call it “default mode,” she says, like zoning out over a load of laundry.

It’s when your most original thinking happens, Ms. Zomorodi said. It’s also called autobiographical planning, where you sort out your life’s highs and lows and form a narrative from which you project your future. It’s amazing, high-powered thinking, really.

“But we can’t tap this amazing brain power if we’re constantly tapping this thing,” she said, holding up her phone.

Pay attention to Big Tech

At the Technology Leadership Institute’s capstone event, Ms. Zomorodi shared with attendees ways we can preserve our humanity in an accelerating world. She didn’t stop at technology, let alone educational tech, but touched on finance, corporate governance, the connected world and all-too-disconnected tech companies.

A mom of two, she veered to the topic of helping young people cope with the monetization of their eyeballs by aggressive online marketers, and she offered prescriptions for addressing the short-term incentives for CEOs to put profits over societal interests.

She sounded notes of optimism bulwarked by real-world insights and suggestions — you can give up one digital addiction for a day and see a difference! At times, she betrayed the trepidation that comes from knowing all too well how Big Tech has its clutches on all our attention spans, wallets and digital footprints.

“I have kids, you’re teachers,” she said. “We have to be optimists. It’s our jobs.”

As a society, we need to rethink our relationship to time. Faster and more isn’t better, kinder or more sustainable.”

—Manoush Zomorodi

Her research into an array of fields has led her to speak of our prevalence of economies: gig, attention, platform, surveillance. It’s all just the economy, she has decided.

Our attention span shifts have sped up in the past few years — from every three minutes to every 45 seconds. Oftentimes we confuse productivity with reactivity, and reacting is what our digital devices train us to do. It’s a state of constant interruption of our creative flow, and we know from research it takes 23 minutes and 15 seconds after an interruption to get truly back on task.

“No wonder it feels like a miracle finishing a project or even just writing an email,” she said.

A key problem these days, in her view, is that there are too few rules about what companies can and cannot do. She equated it to the arrival of the automobile. Even seatbelts were an advancement that took a long time to acquire societal acceptance. Again, she’s optimistic.

“We are asking the right questions about the rules we need in real life to govern online life,” Ms. Zomorodi said. Those questions come in the forms of legal challenges and heated political debate. There’s even an effort to rethink companies’ purpose, replacing short-term earnings with long-term social benefit. “How do we make business more humane?” she asked.

The case for slowing down

“We’re all facing twists and turns in our lives as never before, and you have all made huge changes to the way that you work in the last year alone,” she said.

Think about how you want to spend your daily dopamine allotment, she advised. You can burn through it quickly on Twitter, or you can think of new ways to use your life and your time. That’s a message teachers can convey to their students too.

“As a society, we need to rethink our relationship to time,” Ms. Zomorodi said. “Faster and more isn’t better, kinder or more sustainable.”

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About Tech Expo ’21

Tech Expo, like so much else in 2020, fell victim to the pandemic. The TLI team at the Lower Hudson Regional Information Center was determined to bring it back strong, even if virtual, in 2021. The result of a year of planning and preparations was a dynamic, two-day re-engagement of educators and ed tech providers looking at the state of education in the near-post-COVID world.

Thursday, May 20, saw an afternoon of Vendor Fusion Session Focus Groups, including Blackboard, Day Automation, Edgenuity and PC University. Vendor booths and poster sessions were also opened up to give attendees an early look at the dynamic content available. Day two opened with Ms. Zomorodi’s compelling talk about the implications and opportunities of ever-present, attention-grabbing technology. She was followed by a series of 15 breakout sessions from the region’s top education minds, along with continued poster sessions and the vendor floor.

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That might mean putting down your phone and meditating, or it might mean taking 30 minutes to find a worthwhile local business instead of taking three seconds to click an Amazon link.

“The virus showed us how closely we are connected,” she said. “What motivates us? Caring for each other and doing meaningful work. If we listen to ourselves we can feel those things.”
TLI VENDORS

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A+ Technology & Security Solutions is a service-oriented company with a Leadership Team dedicated to providing the best customer experience to each and every customer. A+ provides solutions for Video Surveillance, Door Access and Visitor Management.

Blackboard
Blackboard is a leading EdTech company serving K-12. They connect a deep understanding of education with the power of technology to continuously push the boundaries of learning.

Day Automation
Day Automation is a systems integrator for Facility Control and Security Systems that specializes in HVAC control access control, video surveillance and utility metering.

Edgenuity
Edgenuity is a provider of K-12 online and blended learning solutions, including online courses, credit recovery, intervention, test preparation and more.

PC University
PC University offers K-12 discounted pricing from over 250 leading manufacturers. Its product lines includes hardware, software, interactive white board solutions, licensing, A/V equipment, peripherals, supplies, laptops, workstations and servers.

Renaissance Learning, Inc. (Renaissance) is a software as a service and learning analytics company that makes cloud-based, PK–12 educational software and adaptive assessments.
Aspire Technology delivers end-to-end network optimization services and software solutions to Mobile Network Operators, Managed Service Providers and Technology Partners.

Atlas is the curriculum mapping solution tailored to the school or district and paired with customized learning programs for innovative PK-12 curriculum leaders.

BrightBytes is the leading, fully managed data and analytics platform for education.

ConvergeOne is a leading IT services provider of collaboration and technology solutions for large enterprises, including K-12.

eChalk integrates beautiful school websites, mobile emergency alerts, learning management system (LMS) and club, team and group tools in one simple tool.

Hapara provides better management, easier differentiation and greater visibility for educators teaching with G Suite.

IXL is a popular subscription-based learning site for K–12, used by over 12 million students, and provides personalized learning for each user.

Microsoft supports educators with affordable and secure devices, powerful tools for education, and free professional development opportunities.

One Vision provides software, virtual, and hardware solutions for Firewall Traversal, Multi-Protocol Gateways, Recording and Streaming Devices, Call Control, and Multipoint Conference Bridges.
Achieve3000 supports students’ math fluency and skills mastery through individualized practice. It’s like having a personal tutor for every student in grades K-12.

EdLight helps teachers focus on student work. With remote learning, it’s harder than ever to see authentic student work. EdLight allows teachers to give real-time feedback.

Imagine Learning is the developer of award-winning digital language, literacy, and math programs used by K-12 students across the nation and worldwide.

Newsela Online Education Platform takes real and new content from trusted providers and turns it into learning materials with the goal of meeting State standards.

NoRedInk is on a mission to unlock every writer’s potential. Engage your students, boost their skills, and guide them through the writing process.

Otus is a K-12 all-in-one Learning Management System, including cloud-based learning management, assessments and data warehouse.

Teq provides solutions for every learning environment. Explore the technology, tools, and instructional solutions that bring all of the dynamic moving parts of education together into the complete thought.

Zoom’s secure, reliable video platform powers all of your communication needs, including meetings, chat, phone, webinars, and online events.