

Please tell your story of the first semester of our 2020-21 school year at your school. Design/format your story in a way that is meaningful to your team and ensure to incorporate the following components:

Author(s): The Venture Staff

Planning, development and implementation:

- **We planned...** From the beginning of the school year, our work focused on implementing Schoology and we planned an engaged, connected experience with our students. We planned ways to welcome them back into our Venture community and how to close the gaps from last spring. We made a plan to mentor and support new teachers.
 - *"We learned and implemented Schoology in our classroom. Within Schoology, I've developed rich math tasks using Flipgrid." Kevin Mahoney*
 - *"We are providing students good options for learning. I feel with the Edmentum classroom available, the students who wish to work toward credits in that fashion from home or in the building have that chance. I like to see all the project based learning that is going on in the building." Andi Banks*
 - *"We planned together during informal meetings, so that I could continue to grow as a teacher. We participated in training to help us better manage our time and stress. We are working on implementing the workshop model and thinking strategies into the classroom. Chase Posey*

- **We facilitated/participated in...** Schoology training, Blended Learning with Catlin Tucker, School-Connect training with Keith Matheny, SEL training with Keith and Andi, PEBC: Tools for Thinkers, Phenomenal Teaching, and Illustrative Math training

- **We are doing...**using protocols and thinking strategies in the classroom, finding ways to increase academic discourse, prioritizing the most important learning

Relationship:

- **Ways we built and nurtured relationships with students:** Building relationships with students has been more of a challenge this year - we could not have our annual Thanksgiving meal, assemblies, weekly wellness etc. However, we do have other ways of connecting. This is our fourth year of implementation of an advisory for every student using School-Connect, an SEL curriculum. We try to keep students in an advisory cohort throughout their time at Venture for the purpose of helping them build relationships with one another and their advisor. While this has its advantages, next year we will move to a different model focused more on letting advisory teachers special in class specific skills. Students will still be in a cohort, but they will have different teachers each year. One important shift this year is in the way we prepare freshmen to be Venture students. All of the freshmen were with the same teacher for English and advisory. This teacher was selected for her commitment to helping less mature students transition into high school. (Translation: she likes teaching middle school). Additionally,

all freshmen participated in the strategies for success class. These decisions paid dividends both in the academic growth of the students and in the consistency of support they received around behaviors.

- *"We continually work to build relationships with students and listen compassionately to the struggles that this past year has brought. We continue to stay flexible to the needs of our students and their families, with regards to schooling options and passing classes. We continue to encourage each other, as colleagues; giving extra grace where it's needed, and knowing we're all doing the very best we can". Rachelle Smotherman*
 - *"Well we all have something in common, we hate Covid! I think building relationships with students this year has been the easiest for me and I think it is because of the culture we have been building for the last couple of years. The students in my class seem to be much more open and willing to talk about various topics. I'm really enjoying most of the students at Venture this year." Nick Meeks*
 - *"Continue showing up to school for students and provide a sense of normalcy and routine during a year of more stress and anxiety in their lives. As a staff we have had a chance to connect safely through Google Meets activities, Secret Santa fun and to normal check-ins with one another during the week." Amy Haynes*
 - *"We in the kitchen participated in preparing 800 breakfasts and lunches for the kids to eat over christmas break" Marybeth Wetsch*
- **Ways we built and nurture relationships with families:** I (Teresa) met individually with every new student and their family. Throughout the year and especially when students were working remotely or were in a hybrid model, I called families to check in. We have a food pantry and students and families are invited to come to Venture to pick up food. However, our ability to nurture relationships with families has been hampered this year. We did not have our Back to School BBQ, Exhibit Night or conferences. Some of our IEPs and other meetings have been virtual. These are typically opportunities for us to build connections.
 - **Ways we built and nurtured relationships as colleagues:** This is another area of challenge for us. We have a staff blog: <http://venturestaff.blogspot.com/> However, moving our staff meetings and PD to a virtual format has left us feeling disconnected. We have four new teachers to the building, three of which are new to the profession. I meet with the three new teachers every month and we are reading, *Creating Cultures of Thinking* and taking turns facilitating by using a protocol. I also schedule 1 hour monthly meetings with each new teacher and they can use those meetings in any way that best supports their learning. We have provided some lunches and snacks to staff and encouraged them to meet in small, socially distanced groups in each other's classrooms.
 - *"I am incredibly impressed with staff and student relationships. We have the most dedicated, flexible, and nurturing staff. One area of improvement I could see us focusing on is relationships with colleagues. I would love to see us have group agreements, assume positive intent, and have felt safety with one another. Specifically I would like for staff to feel safe enough to manage their own conflict. I think focusing*

on staff connection would really help new staff build relationships in such a weird school year.” Raelynn Loken

- *“The lunches and snacks have provided the opportunity to see each other in a cheerful setting. This is valuable. It provides a positive environment to talk. Decorations in the school brought happiness to some students and staff. Patience would be the word I would use to address the nurturing of all relationships. The current situation requires that we take a deep breath and move forward with understanding of stress, regulations, and time. I feel we are doing the best we can do. That includes students and staff. I am trying to be more focused on relationships with students than towing the line academically.” Angie Beck*

Partnership:

- **We partnered with the following people, organizations, departments, colleagues, to...***“We, as a school, have many partnerships to support students/families, and staff from wellness and self care, to demonstrating features of zoom meetings that could be implemented in the blended learning classroom . I feel we have so much support from the District tech people and all District departments. I have felt supported throughout this pandemic process of teaching but that doesn't mean I have not felt overwhelmed at times. All partnerships are in place for the purpose of supporting, educating, modeling, and keeping every voice heard, and everyone as safe as possible.” Diane Eastman*
 - *We have partnered with Second Harvest Food Bank to provide food for our students and their families. Diana Baker*
 - *We have partnered with various businesses and professionals so that our Seniors could interview them for their Sr. Project presentations. Diana Baker*
 - *Continue to partner with NIC through Career Services and Dual Enrollment. Partner with Randy Palmer through the TRIO program. Investigating ways we can partner with CHS and LCHS to provide different services and opportunities for our small population. Amy Haynes*
 - *I have partnered with my mentor teacher, Diane Eastman, who has been an incredible resource to help get me on my feet. She is always happy to listen to me vent or brainstorm, and ready to give advice and guidance that fits the situation. The Special Education department has also been an incredible resource for me as I create a safe space in my classroom that adapts to the needs of my students. There have been many instances where I have reached out for ideas on how to support different needs. They have always been open to suggesting differentiated techniques including offering to take the student into their classrooms to work quietly in a different space. Michelle Pavlik*
 - *“We have partnered with Gizmo, outside speakers and charity organizations. I have partnered with our district instructional coach and district psychologist in order to prepare my students daily for rigorous thinking.” Carlos Gonzalez*

Reflection:

- **We used to think, but now we know...**

- *"I used to think that I needed to know everything before attempting to have my own classroom. Now I know that by being transparent and asking questions I am a stronger teacher. Admitting my faults, working through problems, and reaching out for help are incredible tools that I want to help build in my students above all content knowledge."*
Michelle Pavlik
- *"I used to think , at the beginning of the school year, this is going to break me. Now I know that I am resilient as long as I feel supported and take time to take care of ME."*
Diane Eastman
- *"I used to think I was just a glorified teacher's aide, but now I know that the math teachers actually depend on my being available to help them/their students with whatever task they need, so they can stay sane and handle the extra workload of educating during a pandemic."* *Gayle Mangis*
- **We are proud of...** Each other and the relationships that we build with our students. I am especially proud of the way we are supporting our freshmen.
 - *"I am proud of the staff that has shown up this year pandemic and all to be a team and to help not only our students but their families get through this pandemic"*
Whitney Hamill
 - *"I'm proud of our staff. We teach at-risk high school students during a pandemic. With the stress and uncertainty involved with that job, that makes us an "at-risk" staff in my opinion. Burn out, stress, and anxiety are all more relevant than ever for us. And yet, we've continued to focus on what's important - building relationships with students and furthering their education and character as a result."* *Kevin Mahoney*
- **We appreciate...And are proud of...** Each other
 - *"I am proud to be a part of this team."* *Stephani Penske*
 - *"I am proud of our staff"* *Marita Durk*
 - *"I appreciate most of the people I work with."* *Ben Higgs*
 - *"I am proud of our administration and department."* *Carlos Gonzalez*
 - *"I appreciate some of the challenges because they have allowed me to realize that even during a pandemic, Venture High School supports those most at risk in every aspect of their lives - Staff here has banded together and agreed to work, and make changes that support EVERYONE. (Staff, students, and families)"* *Diane Eastman*
- **We are prioritizing...**Our own and our students' mental health, learning and emotional needs. From the teaching framework, we are prioritizing discourse.
 - *"I prioritize my student's needs over outside given expectations"* *Carlos Gonzalez*
 - *"I am prioritizing support for our new teachers, creating a safe place for learners, and taking "ME TIME" when I need it."* *Diane Eastman*

- **We are in need of...** Normalcy and connection. We are eager to get back on track with our learning and teaching goals and to provide the sort of quality learning experiences that happen when people work together (really together) on things that matter to them. We need students to come to school every day all day. The absenteeism is quite disheartening.
 - *"I am in need of the same things as the rest of the world: peace, health, sunshine, and togetherness. These were things I always thought would be so available and tangible. Perhaps by the end of the summer we will have three of four of these."* Angie Beck
 - *"I am in need of some connection time with colleagues."* Rachelle Smotherman
 - *"I am in need of things to get back to "normal" but I know that is how many people are feeling at this point."* Whitney Hamill
 - *"I need to meet with students so I can better know how to help them (this seems to be the most beneficial, but takes time). I would also like to shadow the Career Coordinators at CHS and LCHS to see what they do. I am sure there are things they do that we could use/implement at Venture."* Amy Haynes

Artifacts:

- **Story of one: select one student for their semester experience. In their own words, including evidence of learning, and a rationale of why this student was chosen**
- **A day in the life of a teacher: In their own words, including evidence of their teaching practice, and rationale of why this teacher was chosen:** Diane Eastman was selected for this section because her work embraces the areas of focus for Venture: Workshop model, discourse and SEL.
 - <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1ZyE-4TDN9ufw0eSvkbn5rc5BkJ09eWMP/view?usp=sharing>
 - Here is a link to one of the essays from this lesson. It was selected because the author is similar to many of our students. She struggled as a reader and writer, but she persisted and wrote a pretty decent essay:
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1v2yh8z7hxxi_xsvJiJqBZ7J9h3YXXoVwDvkXmDgKoGs/edit?usp=sharing
- Any other examples/evidence important to your story.