

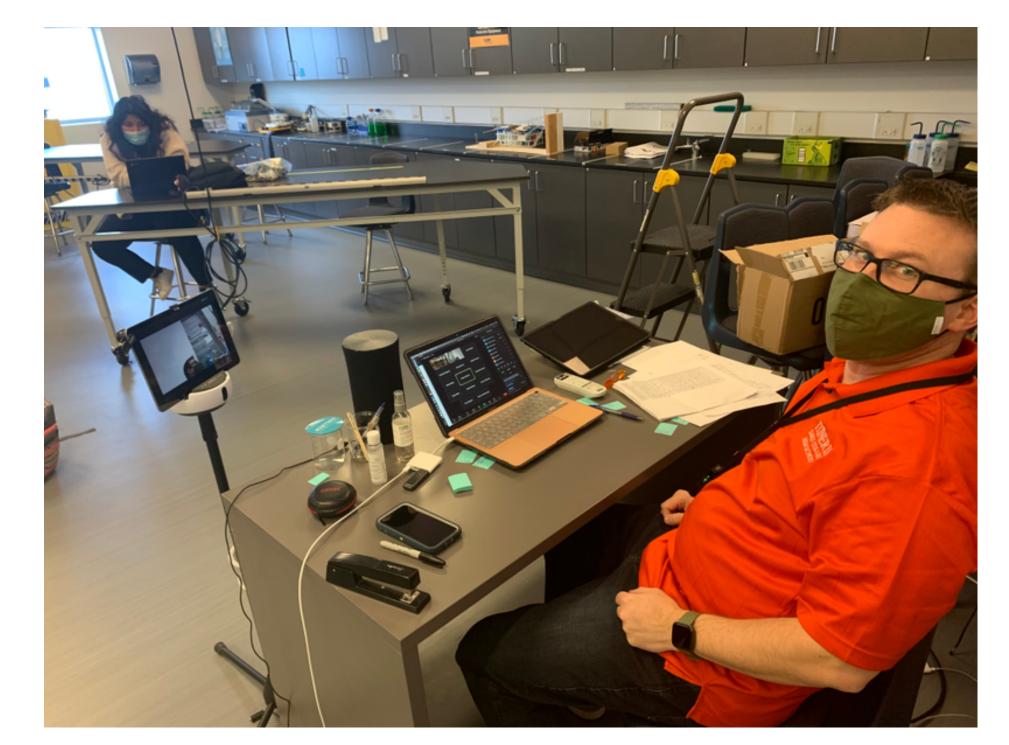
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# **Robot technology provides connection** for remote students

Apr 22, 2021 12:37PM • By Jet Burnham

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### Upcoming Events Near You

Mr. Robinson's Christmas **Carols Sing-Along** 

> 6:00pm · L. Clark Cushing Heritage Center



Sugar Factory Playhouse: A Gift to Remember





Schorr Gallery: Tony Hunter 8:00pm · West Jordan City Hall



Wheeler Farm Festive Fridays

7:00pm · Murray Park Amphitheater



Sugar Factory Playhouse: A Gift to Remember

7:30pm · Midvale Preforming Arts Center



Schorr Gallery: Tony Hunter





**ELF the Musical** 

7:30pm · Hopebox Theatre



• Add Your Event

Technology and teacher innovation have been the key to successful remote learning. (Photo courtesy of Jeff Bossard.)

#### By Jet Burnham | j.burnham@mycityjournals.com

The pandemic accelerated innovation in education by 10 years, said Jeff Bossard, director of students at Itineris Early College High School.

"The model of what school looks like now is still the same model that's been going on for 100 years," Bossard said. "But the pandemic has really pushed the personalized learning-the kind of anywhere, anytime learning, which was really the direction it was going but we got there sooner. We didn't wait till the next generation for it to happen; it happened this summer."

Itineris, which has been named one of the top schools in the country six years in a row by US News and World Report and the only Utah public high school in the Top 500 this year, already had a headstart over other schools when the pandemic pushed instruction online: every student already had a device and internet access at home, and teachers were already using online platforms to teach content.

"We were moving in this blended learning model direction anyway, but the pandemic has just accelerated it by about 10 years," Bossard said. This past year, Itineris has continued to push ahead to offer the best teaching tools and methods available. "We feel like we're cutting edge as far as providing the best level of education that anybody can in this circumstance."

Itinieris administrators selected tools from the slew of sales pitches they've received for hightech tools for virtual classrooms, which have proven to be valuable in the current learning environment, said Bossard.

Several Itineris teachers use a Swivl, a robotic device that holds an iPad that is used to stream the class. The device swivels to keep the iPad screen on the teacher, who wears a microphone clip which the device tracks, so that when the teacher walks to the board or moves near a student, the camera follows them, allowing virtual students to see what is going on in the whole classroom. Additional microphones make it easier for students to ask questions and for the students at home to hear and to respond.

Carter Larm, a senior, notices a difference in classes that use a Swivl.

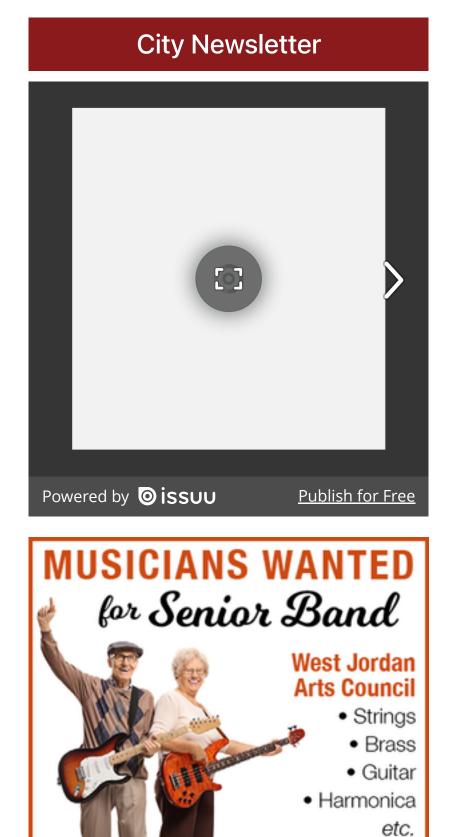
"It lets the teacher move around without worrying about leaving the online students behind," he said. "I can see and hear the teacher at all times. I feel very much a part of the class, and, unlike last year, online students actually get called on and participate in class."

Language arts teacher LeAnn Nisson likes that the Swivl allows virtual students to feel connected to their teacher and classmates, which results in better engagement.

"A lot of what motivates teens is contact or group work with their peers," Nisson said. "They love the social interaction. That motivation piece is really missing with technology."

## **NOVEMBER**







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This year, with Itineris students taking a mix of in-person and virtual classes, teachers have had to find new ways to engage and connect with students when some of them are sitting in-class and others are joining in virtually. Nisson said it's important for her to get to know her students informally by chatting before and after class and reaching out through email.

"I try to make that personal connection so that they know that I care about them," she said. "If they have questions, or if they're struggling, they're more likely to approach me, even if they feel the distance and disconnection through the technology."

Bossard said that in addition to technology, this kind of teacher innovation has been key to successfully adapt to the current learning environment. Bossard's wife teaches in Canyons District, and his daughter works in Granite District, so he's watched with interest how different schools have adapted to the circumstances.

"It is exciting to see what teachers have come up with, trying to make it work the best they can in a situation that nobody asked for but we're all in," Bossard said. "They've really tried to make it work for the betterment of the education for the students. So I give teachers and educators a lot of credit over the last nine months."



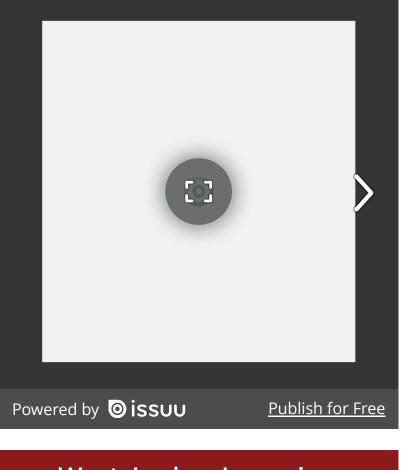
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