

Best Customer Experience in EdTech: How Curriculum Associates Excelled During COVID-19

Curriculum Associates, an edtech company committed to making classrooms better places for teachers and students, believes that all students have the chance to succeed if given the right tools and support. With a laser focus on educators' and students' needs over their own bottom line, Curriculum Associates provides outstanding service and support to its customers, which has resulted in a renewal rate of nearly 93 percent this year.

This spring, Curriculum Associates on-boarded 1.1 million new students to its award-winning *i-Ready* program in just four weeks once the pandemic hit, upping the total number of users nationwide to more than 11 million. Through its [i-Ready Partners](#) program, which includes access to a customer service team, professional development experts, account managers, sales reps, technical support team, and free customer portal, the company provided comprehensive support for its new and existing customers.

Proactive Approach

Prior to the stay-at-home mandate, Curriculum Associates' technology solutions, sales engineers, and technical support teams built proactive dashboards that allow its *i-Ready Partners* teams who were working from home to see when a new instruction-only school signed on. Since these schools had not been through the technical training the company provides during normal circumstances, this allowed teams to engage with new customers quickly in order to get them trained.

This proactive measure also helped Curriculum Associates engage the proper school/district contacts when they saw network issues. The company was able to see how every student was doing with *i-Ready* from a technical standpoint and then reach out to the appropriate IT contacts to let them know if students needed help. Curriculum Associates was able to proactively engage many content filter and firewall vendors that districts were using to manage remote learning and was able to clear up issues before they became major problems.

During the start of the pandemic, as well as the start of this school year, Curriculum Associates also had a record number of parents, grandparents, and guardians calling for support. These call times lasted longer than typical educator calls, however the support team was able to strategically manage the volume while making sure students weren't stuck and parents/grandparents/guardians were shown the empathy and respect they deserved.

One parent said, "This morning I reached out for help in regards to *i-Ready*. I would like to state that Chris Thomas [on Curriculum Associates' support team] was extremely helpful, thoughtful, and took the time to walk me through the process of signing-on my daughter for her at-home distance learning. Chris was very reassuring and kind in helping us. During these hard times, it is super cool we have people like Chris to help us parents navigate the whole distance learning requirements."

Unmatched Technical Support

Both before and during COVID, Curriculum Associates' technical support team has used a three-tiered support process coupled with a proactive monitoring approach to help create and sustain an environment where teachers can teach and students can learn— without technology issues getting in the way.

Sales engineers engage districts every year to ensure their IT staff and lab techs always have the latest technical information they need about *i-Ready* to effectively support it in the classroom. After an on-site

training, district staff from Gaston County Schools in Gaston, NC praised this level of support saying, “Thank you! Today the Gaston County team received a great tech training from *i-Ready*’s Engineering Team. They provided a myriad of ways for us to support our teachers when tech issues arise.”

Staff also said, “This goes a long way toward strengthening the partnership between Curriculum Associates and Gaston County Schools. It definitely came at a good time and it was a great service to offer. You hit a homerun!”

Curriculum Associates’ Tier 1 Technical Support team handles all calls and emails related to product questions, resolving between 85-90% of cases within the first day. The team handled more than 89,000 technical support cases last year and more than 55,000 cases this year to date. The team’s average speed-to-answer time over the past four years is just 30.15 seconds, and fewer than 5% of calls are abandoned by the caller, a number which far exceeds the industry average of approximately 15%.

Despite the company’s significant digital product growth, the overall number of Tier 1 inquiries has increased at a declining rate over the past four academic years. This is a testament to the up-front and comprehensive training the team provides its customers from the very start of the partnership. After recently receiving Tier 1 support, a staff member from Osceola County Schools in Kissimmee, FL said, “LaTonya [of Curriculum Associates] exceeded the wow factor! She is such a calm, soft-spoken, caring individual. You need more people like her! She knocked it out the park!”

Curriculum Associates’ Tier 2 industry-certified solutions engineers are responsible for all escalations from the Tier 1 support group and for proactively monitoring *i-Ready* traffic. With this approach, the team provides its customers with an early warning of any usage problems associated with *i-Ready*.

The Tier 2 support team also has the ability to provide granular information by district, school, class, and student so that districts’ IT staff can quickly isolate and resolve problems. District staff from Chesapeake Public Schools in Chesapeake, VA complimented the team on this approach, saying, “I appreciate your efforts and ability to give us the “outside looking in” view. You’re the only testing vendor that takes support that far.”

Professional Development

In addition to this high-level of personal technical support, Curriculum Associates offers a plethora of online tips, training videos, and planning tools accessible 24/7 to support customers with their *i-Ready* experience.

Since last July, the company has notably delivered more than 14,500 professional development sessions – more than any other back-to-school timeframe to date – to further support educators during the pandemic. And, for the first time, the company delivered parent-facing professional development on a large scale to assist families with online and at-home learning. It additionally created free online kits with a collection of turnkey tools for at-home assessment to support district leaders, school leaders, teachers, and families.

When working with customers as important as educators and the students they instruct, Curriculum Associates believes excellent customer service is a non-negotiable. Its investment in a robust and holistic approach to serving customers is one of the many reasons it is a leading company in the edtech space – both before and during COVID-19.