

# The Night Is Dark ...

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The night is dark and I am far from home.

—Cardinal Newman  
(1833, *Lead Kindly Light*)

For many, the previous 18 months have been dark and uncertain. Jobs have been changed, friends are different, and future events seem threatening—the playing field of doomsayers and charlatans preaching negativity.

Education, our professional world, has been forced to evolve in ways for which most of us were unprepared, and our spe-

cific domain, distance education, has been castigated by some with words and phrases indicating distance education is “second best” and online learning should be “abandoned.” Certainly, much has been lost.

Also, much has been gained, at least in these four areas: students, teachers, administrators, and researchers.

*Students* have discovered that distance education works. Students have learned and many have changed their outlook about how to learn—new skills have been acquired.

*Teachers* have changed also. The idea of using social media for learning has been forced on teachers regardless of subject area. The computer is now more than it was—when well-used, the computer allows communication, interaction, and idea creation—even the smart phone has been harnessed as a person’s learning device.

*Administrators* have been forced to develop just-in time-solutions to problems that few imagined. Some of our educational leaders have even realized that the future of teaching and learning offers a wealth of new approaches that if correctly designed will offer rich possibilities for improving schools, organizations, and colleges.

*Researchers* have discovered new domains for study in real-world and

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