

IDEAS AND RESOURCES FOR THE COVID-19 CRISIS

from recent Marshall Memos – Updated June 16, 2020

During the pandemic, millions of students are unable to go to school, and teachers are stretched thin attending to students' needs, in many cases while taking care of their own children. Below is a collection of recent Marshall Memo items that may be helpful. Be strong and be safe!

1. [Quotes about the pandemic](#)
2. [Articles on understanding the pandemic](#)
3. [Articles on the human side of online learning](#)
4. [Articles on pedagogical issues with online learning](#)
5. [Articles on planning for school reopening](#)
6. [Specific suggestions for online teaching](#)
7. [Videos, graphics, and lessons](#)
8. [Free children's books](#)
9. [Online teaching tech resources and troubleshooting](#)
10. [Kim Marshall's teaching materials](#)

QUOTES ABOUT THE PANDEMIC

“Not so fast.”

Superintendents and assessment experts on buying commercial diagnostic assessments

“Meaningful bonds just cannot be made over Zoom.”

Daniel Dolgic in a letter to *The New York Times*, June 7, 2020, one of eight responding to the question, [Does Working from Home Work?](#)

“If we do not take steps to actively shape our virtual school climate, it will be shaped for us.”

Jessica Hoffman, Marc Brackett, and Scott Levy in [“How to Foster a Positive School Climate in a Virtual World”](#) in *EdSurge News*, May 21, 2020; the authors are at jessica.hoffman@yale.edu, marc.brackett@yale.edu, and scott.r.levy@yale.edu.

“It’s hard because as a teacher, you’re not a therapist, you’re not a social worker, you’re not a doctor or a nurse – but those are all roles we take on when we become a teacher.”

Evin Shinn, Seattle high-school teacher, quoted in [“‘Teachers Cannot Be Silent’: How Educators Are Showing Up for Black Students Following Protests”](#) by Madeline Will in *Education Week Teacher*, June 1, 2020

“Trying to interact with other humans without being able to smile is the facial equivalent of communicating via text message; it’s easy to be misunderstood.”

Belinda Luscombe in “When in Doubt, Just Assume I’m Smiling” in *Time*, June 1-8, 2020, (Vol. 125, #20-21, p. 24)

“To all ed companies, PD providers, and anyone else who has a product, PLEASE STOP. JUST STOP. Believe me, we know how to reach you, and I will if I need you. Otherwise JUST STOP.”

Twitter message from a frustrated principal, April 2020

“Endurance is patience. It is shortening your time horizon so you just have to get through this day. Endurance is living with unpleasantness. In fact, it is finding you can adapt and turn the strangest circumstances into routine. Endurance is fortifying. It is discovering you can get socked in the nose and take it. Above all, endurance is living with uncertainty. Sometimes it’s remaining quiet in the face of uncertainty because no conjecture will really tell you what is coming. Endurance is the knowledge that the only way out is through and whatever must be borne will be borne.”

David Brooks in [“The People Are Leading the Leaders”](#) in *The New York Times*, May 15, 2020

“I think my role shifts completely into this symbolic keeper of hope. My role in this family is to make sure that we know that we are trying to get them whatever they need, having staff members feeling like we care about them as humans and as families, and all of the details of their professional lives will get resolved.”

Paul Kelly, principal of Elk Grove High School in Illinois, quoted in “‘There Is No Guidebook’: Being the Principal in the Age of Coronavirus” by Denisa Superville in *Education Week*, March 18, 2020, <https://bit.ly/33FCVZT>

“We’re not medical experts, we’re not city planners. This is a time for simplicity and being careful not to throw in too many bells and whistles.”

New York City educator Eva Moskowitz (see item #1k, Memo 829)

“I want to send a message to parents, and in particular to working moms, who will inevitably take on most of this home labor along with working remotely: This is going to be messy and that is OK.”

Jennie Weiner (University of Connecticut) in “I Refuse to Run a Home School” in *The New York Times*, March 20, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/33U1mmq>

“Typing LOL is not the same as actually laughing out loud.”

Alana Semuels, “Does Remote Work Actually Work?” in *Time*, April 6/13, 2020, p. 46

“This is my 16th year teaching, and I feel like I’m a first-year teacher. The amount of work and new things that I’m encountering on a daily basis is astounding.”

Gloria Nicodemi, New York City high-school science teacher, quoted in “Teachers’ Herculean Task: Moving 1.1 Million Children to Online School” by David Chen in *The New York Times*, March 30, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/3bUfe2R>

“When hurricanes, wildfires, and now the coronavirus upend our way of life, they call for everybody, literally every individual, to step into the breach. Not just first responders or

caregivers, not only state governors or national leaders, but all of us... In good times, we can rely more on our boss or others to get things done, but that's no longer enough. It is our own leadership moment, too. We are all in charge."

Michael Useem, University of Pennsylvania Wharton School, in "It's Our Leadership Moment" in *Knowledge Wharton*, March 30, 2020, <https://whr.tn/3dW7X4p>

"Don't worry if you are not the perfect homeschooling parent; don't worry if you are torn between working at home and helping your kids. Don't let your kids spend nine hours a day doing schoolwork online – cut them off and tell the teacher it was too much. Don't let these days be joyless for your kids."

Jennifer Gallagher, Long Beach, NY school superintendent, in a message to parents, quoted in "How Much Home Teaching Is Too Much? Schools Differ in Demands on Parents" by Christina Samuels in *Education Week*, April 2, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Xcyfti>

"Trust me on this: There's a good chance that, years from now, you will feel a bit sentimental for these weeks spent in social isolation. We're built for challenging times. We are writing the stories we will tell our children and grandchildren. Driving down a suburban street waving to elementary school children may not have the historical gravity of landing on Omaha Beach or working on a wartime assembly line. But when the children of the pandemic are old and gray, they will reminisce about the time their teachers paraded past their house because all the schools were closed. It will be a warm memory, even though so many people got sick, lost their jobs, and were afraid. They don't have the vocabulary today to describe it, but the lessons will stick and become clearer in the retelling. It's about social cohesion, love and loyalty, and how good people step up when we need them to."

Robert Pondiscio in "The Lessons That Last in the Time of Pandemic" in *Education Gadfly*, April 8, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2V20dX8>

"Sending home worksheet after worksheet is unlikely to result in fruitful learning that will stick."
Paul France (see item #1, Memo 832)

"All over social media, teachers are sharing stories tinged with both frustration and fear for students who haven't logged into learning platforms, participated in threaded discussions, completed an assignment, or returned texts and e-mails... The informal check-ins that schools typically rely on – a teacher, coach, bus driver, or cafeteria worker who would normally be alert to a child in distress – have been disrupted. There are just fewer eyes on children right now."

Stephen Sawchuk and Christina Samuels in "Where Are They? Students Go Missing in Shift to Remote Classes" in *Education Week*, April 10, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2wT5jMh>

"We're about to see what happens when we turn up the volume on families and turn it down on schools."

Paul von Hippel (quoted in item #3, Memo 833)

"Imagine you just got your driver's license. You're starting to date. Your team finally clinched the playoffs. Prom is right around the corner. But now you're stuck all day at home, within 100 feet of your parents, for conceivably months on end... Although adolescents are not considered high risk from a medical perspective, they are still facing very real social and emotional challenges... It is essential that we all look out for adolescents, be sympathetic to their frustrations, and make sure that they have the resources and supports in place for optimal development."

Leah Lessard and Hannah Schacter in "Why the Coronavirus Crisis Hits Teenagers Particularly Hard: Developmental Scientists Explain" in *Education Week*, April 15, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2yyAzjV>; Schacter is at hannah.schacter@wayne.edu.

“Life without school is much more boring than I thought it would be.”

Una, 14 years old (see item #1, Memo 834)

“Treasure the fact that some kids are escaping from hours of test preparation each day.”

Andy Hargreaves in “A Complete List of What to Do – and Not to Do – for Everyone Teaching Kids at Home During the Coronavirus Crisis” in the *Washington Post*, April 7, 2020, <https://wapo.st/3bK9zNg>

“If sitting is the new smoking, some are up to three packs a day.”

Dan Rockwell in “7 Ways to Fuel Energy During a Pandemic” in *Leadership Freak*, April 24, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2ySmG07>

“There is a reason that homeschooling is rare.”

Robert Slavin (see item #1, Memo 835)

“Some students are not connecting because they felt invisible while they were in the physical classroom, so they feel that they will not be missed in the virtual one.”

Peter DeWitt (see item #2, Memo 835)

“Distance learning requires us to be humans in an inhuman situation. We can’t simply provide lessons and assessments; we have to bridge this digital gap and carry some sense of humor and goodwill and community through the cold wiring. If we’ve succeeded in even a modicum of that task, we owe that to the success in the months prior when we created something special. A school family. A community that could rely on itself, that could flourish even in isolation.”

Daniel Parsons in “I See Education and Humanity in ‘Full Bloom’ in My Covid-19 Classroom” in *Education Gadfly*, April 24, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3aZe7Or>

“Without preparation or permission, we’re participating in the greatest social science experiment of all time.”

Andy Markowitz (see item #3, Memo 836)

“Districts must hold teachers harmless from the challenges unique to the coronavirus environment, but they also have a public obligation to make sure students are being taught as effectively as is practical to expect.”

Kency Nittler and Patricia Saenz-Armstrong in “Teacher Evaluations and Support During Covid-19 Closures,” National Council on Teacher Quality, May 1, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3biaCTr>

Kids Comment on Doing School at Home

In this *New York Times* feature, Henry Dodd compiles statements from a number of U.S. schoolchildren about the Covid-19 situation. Some excerpts:

“Life without school is much more boring than I thought it would be. Without the summerlike feeling of no work and being able to see friends, it’s actually very depressing.”

Una, age 14, Beacon, NY

“It’s really easy to get distracted at home. I like going to school and using the time at school to do schoolwork. Now all schoolwork is done at home, so my brain thinks there’s more homework

because my brain hasn't adjusted to staying home the whole day. Learning is difficult because before you were jogging and now you are crawling.”

Juny, age 14, San Francisco, CA

“It's hell. My teachers think that a responsible amount of work to be assigning is 40 minutes (about a class period) plus half an hour plus of homework. This is from EVERY teacher, so it adds up real fast. Over the last few days, I've had more work than I would usually have if schools weren't closed – and I have to do it sitting in the same spot for hours.”

Jasper, age 17, Brooklyn, NY

“I'm doing online learning through Google Classroom, and sometimes it's difficult. My math problems won't attach, the file didn't save properly. But we have to work through that, and it's necessary to help others.”

Eleanor, age 14, Wales, MA

“I like our video morning meeting every day with my teachers and friends. It makes me feel like I'm still in school. My baby sister won't leave me alone, so I decided to let her join.”

Ella, age 6, Manhattan, NY

“It's harder to focus at home as there's no one to discipline you for playing on your phone or talking to a friend. It's harder to grasp certain concepts, specifically those that are more hands-on. It's harder to ask questions since there's no way to virtually raise your hand. And it's harder to keep a smile on my face, because I don't know if or when I'll see my teachers and classmates in person again.”

Josephine, age 18, Woodstock, CT

“My phone is right next to me, so it's so easy to pick up my phone and text my friend, who I see on the screen, or check the newest post on Instagram and TikTok.”

Daniella, age 17, Burlington, NJ

“There are days where I don't want to do any work, and it's really easy to just not do it. Learning at school definitely helps motivate me to get my work done, because I'm in the environment to do work and there's really nothing else I can do. At home I have the liberty to literally do anything other than schoolwork.”

Valeria, age 16, Riverdale Park, MD

“Every day I take a walk around my neighborhood with my parents and when I see my friends, I'm told I have to stay six feet away. I get really sad I can't be with them. I'm also scared they'll never find a cure and I'll never get to play close with my friends again. I'm hoping that things will be back to normal someday.”

Sasha, age 9, Los Angeles, CA

“I'm in my last year of middle school, and I will probably have to finish it from home. I wonder about the students next year, students who I'll spend the next four years with, whose family died because of this, whose parents died because of this. I wonder about my family. Are they going to get sick? I wonder about the children who'll die. I wonder if I'll be one of them. If my family will be the one this virus reaches next. I start high school next year, and I wonder how.”

Louisa, age 13, Jacksonville, FL

“My little brother asks every morning if the germs went away yet – he really misses school like me.”

Tessa, age 7, Montclair, NJ

“Online school is the equivalent of no school. The one-on-one time, the accountability, the schedule and routine are all gone. No parent is perfect, and no parent can effectively replace seven to eight teachers, all with different subjects. The issue is the loss of many factors for success. Isolation, no routine, even just the lack of repercussions for not doing work. All of this leads to a decline.”

Pres, age 17, Fayetteville, AR

“Thousands of juniors (including myself) have selected rigorous courses for our last full year before our apps are due. Many of us are taking five or six A.P. classes and finally getting leadership positions for the clubs and activities we dedicated so much time to. As I sit at home, I feel that the edge that I have been working so long for is slipping away. I was ready to make this last full semester count.”

Fahad, age 17, Northborough, MA

“Most schools in America have senior prom, Senior Ditch Day, senior prank, senior banquets, and most important, graduation. No one signed a contract giving me the right to any of that, but then again, I feel entitled to my senior year. When I walked out of school on March 11, I didn’t expect that to be the last time I would see the people and the places that helped me mature into the person that I am today. Now when people ask what high school taught me, I can honestly say that I learned something outside of math and science. Nothing in life is promised.”

Rachel, age 18, San Jose, CA

“Polling Our Littlest: ‘I Can’t Believe I Am Going to Say This, but I Would Rather Be in School’” by Henry Dodd in *The New York Times*, April 15, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/351mT8B>

[Back to page one](#)

UNDERSTANDING THE PANDEMIC

Details on Virus Transmission

In this online article, Erin Bromage (University of Massachusetts/Dartmouth) presents some key facts about Covid-19:

• *How this very infectious virus moves from person to person* – For Covid-19 to take hold in your body, you need to be exposed to an infectious dose – estimated to be at least 1,000 viral particles – and that can take place over time; the key variables are virus particles and exposure time. You can ingest 1,000 particles in a single breath, or by inhaling 100 particles in 10 breaths, or by inhaling 10 particles in 100 breaths. To get a sense of how many viral particles might be floating around, consider these statistics:

- A cough releases about 3,000 droplets traveling at 50 miles an hour. Most fall to the ground, but some can stay in the air and travel across a room in a few seconds.

- A sneeze releases about 30,000 droplets traveling at 200 miles an hour and can easily get across a room, as well as falling on surfaces (as can cough droplets).
- The droplets in an infected person's cough or sneeze may disperse as many as 200 million virus particles into the surrounding air.
- Talking releases about 200 virus particles per minute.
- Breathing out through one's mouth releases fewer droplets because they're not coming from the lower respiratory tract. Most move at low velocity and fall quickly to the ground. Breathing out through one's nose releases even fewer droplets.

The bottom line: sneezing and coughing are highly efficient ways to infect people nearby. You can enter a room where a person sneezed a few minutes earlier and quickly inhale the viral load needed to get Covid-19. If you are talking face to face with an infected person, it takes longer to get to the 1,000-particle level – roughly 5 to 10 minutes.

These figures are the reasons for mask wearing, physical distancing, adequate testing, and contact tracing – and why infected people need to quarantine themselves.

- *Asymptomatic transmission* – At least 44 percent of all infections come from people who don't yet have active symptoms, with increasing viral shedding as they get closer to being symptomatic. A person can be spreading the virus into the environment up to five days before symptoms appear.

- *Risks of infection* – The worst environments for transmission, says Bromage, are prisons, workplaces where people work shoulder to shoulder (meat packing plants, call centers), religious ceremonies, weddings, funerals, birthday parties, and face-to-face business meetings. In one restaurant (see the diagram in the link below), an asymptomatic person breathed out low levels of the virus during a 90-minute dinner and infected half of the people at that table, three-quarters of the people at tables downwind (the air conditioning system moved air across the room), and two people upwind (probably due to turbulence in the flow of air). Nobody at two other tables out of the airflow were infected. Workplaces can carry similar risks as viral particles spread through an office or cubicle area. Choirs are particularly risky since energetic singing releases more droplets from the lower respiratory tract. Energetic indoor sporting events are similar.

The key principle is viral exposure, even if the viral load is low but there are droplets in the air for an extended time – and even if you are 50 feet away from an infected person.

- *What's less risky* – All the transmissions described above were indoors. And indeed, 90 percent of documented infections happened at home, in workplaces, on public transportation, and in social gatherings and restaurants. In countries that have done rigorous contact tracing, only one infection took place outdoors. “The effects of sunlight, heat, and humidity on viral survival all serve to minimize the risk to everyone outside,” says Bromage. Outdoors, there's not enough time to achieve an infectious viral load, even walking, jogging, or biking near an infected person. The risk of infection is also low in a well-ventilated indoor space with few people nearby.

- *Shopping* – With masks and social distancing, grocery stores and malls are not very risky because of low density of people, high air volume, and limited time in the indoor space (for store workers, it's a different story). Shopping has accounted for only 3-5 percent of infections.

- *Surfaces* – These are an issue, of course, because infected droplets land on them. This makes it important to wear gloves, not touch your eyes, mouth, or nose, and wash your hands frequently.

“The Risks – Know Them – Avoid Them” by Erin Bromage, May 6, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2WGYiaa>; Bromage can be reached at ebromage@umassd.edu.

Putting the Pandemic in Historical and Epidemiological Perspective

In this *New Yorker* article, Michael Specter describes the scientific events that have shaped the career of Dr. Anthony Fauci. Since 1984, he’s been director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and he’s currently at the epicenter of the coronavirus crisis. Specter’s article lists some previous epidemics that wreaked havoc through history:

- In 430 BC, Athens was struck by a plague that killed as many as 2/3 of its residents.
- Beginning in 165 AD, smallpox contributed to the downfall of the Roman Empire.
- In the 14th century, the Black Death killed more than half of Europe’s population.

However, by the middle of the 20th century, improvements in antibiotics and sanitary conditions led many scientists to believe it was possible to eradicate, or at least control, infectious diseases. Fauci, who had specialized in this field at the start of his career, worried that he’d chosen an area that was going to become a sideshow.

Then several deadly diseases changed the game. AIDS has killed more than 30 million people, and tuberculosis infects about a quarter of humanity, killing 1.5 million people in 2018 alone. “But the greatest threat that humanity faces, by far,” says Specter, “is a global outbreak of a lethal virus for which no treatment has been found.” And indeed, COVID-19 has forced billions of people into lockdown, and another pandemic like this will inevitably appear – maybe next year, maybe in a decade, maybe in a century.

“We live in evolutionary competition with microbes – bacteria and viruses,” said Nobel Prize-winning molecular biologist Joshua Lederberg. There are countless viruses in animals and humans, most of them harmless. For a virus to pose a worldwide threat, it has to meet three critical conditions:

- It emerges from animals and humans don’t have immunity to it.
- The virus sickens and kills humans (the vast majority of viruses don’t).
- The virus spreads efficiently – e.g., through coughing, sneezing, or handshakes.

For years, Fauci and others have been concerned about a virus that would punch all three tickets – new, deadly, and infectious – and that’s what we have in COVID-19.

For most of human history, a virus with all three characteristics would afflict many people in the community where it emerged, but then stop spreading. But as human mobility increased, pathogens could spread more widely. Nowadays, someone can wake up with an infectious virus in China and fly to America, spreading it intercontinentally the same day. According to one analysis, at least 430,000 people have arrived in the U.S. on direct flights from China since the coronavirus outbreak began.

Lederberg and others have advocated for greatly expanded early-warning systems, particularly in the developing world, as well as stronger measures to respond to microbial threats. Unfortunately their alarm bells were almost completely ignored. In 2004, a year after those recommendations were made, a highly pathogenic form of avian influenza, H5N1, leaped from waterfowl to chickens to humans. This time, the world was lucky – it was deadly but not very contagious. Five years later, a new influenza virus, H1N1, infected nearly a quarter of the global population before vaccines were developed – but again we were lucky: it was highly contagious but not nearly as deadly as most strains of influenza. Dodging the bullet twice fostered complacency and made it more difficult for scientists to create a sense of urgency.

A somewhat hopeful development is that genetic engineering has made it possible to respond to an epidemic much more quickly than in the past. After the COVID-19 outbreak began, it took scientists less than a month to sequence the genome of the virus; by the end of February, the instructions were on the Internet and the virus had been recreated in labs around the world so that scientists could seek treatments and vaccines. The problem is that treatments and vaccines will be virus-specific. Each year scientists try to scope out newly-evolving viruses and create vaccines, but it's hit-or-miss: in the 2017-18 flu season, the vaccine worked for only about one-third of the people who received it. And scientists are playing whack-a-mole with each new virus. "We keep trying to develop a vaccine for one thing – usually the last one – and it's a waste of time," says Fauci. "Every time we get hit, it is always something we didn't expect."

Fauci has long advocated for developing a universal influenza vaccine that would provide lasting defense against all strains. "Similar to tetanus," he said, "a universal flu vaccine probably would be given every ten years. And if you get one that is really universal, you can vaccinate just about everyone in the world." This would cost hundreds of millions of dollars to develop and test, and to date, that money hasn't been raised. Perhaps that will change now. "To plan a coherent biological future, rather than simply scramble to contain each new pandemic," Specter concludes, "will require an entirely new kind of political commitment."

"Annals of Medicine: The Good Doctor" by Michael Specter in *The New Yorker*, April 20, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2KpmZSB>

Why Is Covid-19 Hitting Some Areas Harder Than Others?

In this *New York Times* article, Hannah Beech, Alissa Rubin, Anatoly Kurmanaev, and Ruth MacLean report that the coronavirus has spread to almost every country on the planet, but some areas are faring much worse than others – for example, the Dominican Republic with many more cases than neighboring Haiti, Iran than Iraq, Indonesia than Malaysia, New York City than Bangkok. What explains these seemingly random disparities? Here are scientists' current insights about areas with lower rates of infection:

- *A younger population* – Many of the areas that have done better so far have a more youthful demographic profile – for example, Africa is the world's youngest continent. Young people, say the reporters, have stronger immune systems and "are more likely to contract mild or

asymptomatic cases that are less transmissible to others.” But there are exceptions, including Japan, which has an older population and relatively lower infection rate.

- *Distancing* – In Thailand and India, person-to-person greetings are done at a distance, with palms joined together, and so far those countries have been hit less hard. Wearing face masks has been quite common in many countries well before this pandemic. And in the developing world, the elderly are more often cared for at home rather than being clustered in nursing homes. In addition, some regions are more isolated by geography and sparse public transportation.

- *Heat and light* – An early theory was that Covid-19 spread most easily in temperate regions like northern Italy and the U.S., but one of the worst outbreaks occurred in the equatorial Amazon region of Brazil. There are advantages to being outdoors (versus in close quarters indoors), and the virus wilts on surfaces exposed to direct sunlight. But the coronavirus appears to be so contagious that it can overpower the slight benefit of a warmer climate if people don’t take proper precautions.

- *Lockdowns* – Countries like Vietnam, Senegal, Rwanda, and Greece that immediately implemented strict shelter-in-place policies have been able to contain the virus. Countries that had experienced pandemics in the past – tuberculosis, Ebola, H.I.V. – knew the drill and acted quickly, including the suspension of religious gatherings. Iran is a notable exception.

- *Superspreaders* – Luck has played an important part; in several countries, a single infected person attending a crowded social function was responsible for exponential spread: one passenger infected 634 others on the *Diamond Princess* cruise ship, and one woman in South Korea attended a funeral and spread the disease to hundreds of congregants and then thousands of others. “Because an infected person may not experience symptoms for a week or more, if at all,” say Beech, Rubin, Kurmanaev, and MacLean, “the disease spreads under the radar, exponentially and seemingly at random.”

There’s a broader caveat, says Dr. Ashish Jah of the Harvard Global Health Research Institute: “We are really early in this disease. If this were a baseball game, it would be the second inning, and there’s no reason to think that by the ninth inning the rest of the world that looks now like it hasn’t been affected won’t be like other places.”

“Virus Batters Some Areas. Why Does It Spare Others?” by Hannah Beech, Alissa Rubin, Anatoly Kurmanaev, and Ruth MacLean in *The New York Times*, May 4, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/2WkSSCD>

Teachable Moments During the Crisis

In this *Edutopia* article, Sarah Gonser says COVID-19 “offers teachers the unique instructional opportunity to tap into students’ innate curiosity about the virus and deliver lessons that are timely, prompt kids to dig deep, and – ideally – provide a modicum of comfort during a time of alarming headlines and copious misinformation.” Gonser suggests six possible areas and highlights the work of teachers in each one (see the link below for details):

- The math behind pandemics – Rates of change, including exponential growth, calculus, and modeling;
- Virology and biology – How a virus affects the human body, especially the lungs;
- Journalism – Teaching students to find and compellingly relate their unique stories of the pandemic;
- Makers of history – Journaling as a powerful tool and an outlet for students as they create a daily first-person account of their lives as history unfolds around them;
- Asking hard ethical questions – For upper-grade students, this is a time for empathy, self-reflection, critical thinking, and debate about moral choices and next steps;
- Media literacy – Discerning what’s true and what isn’t with online information (see the Ad Fontes Media Bias Chart linked below).

“Innovative Ways to Make Coronavirus a Teachable Moment” by Sarah Gonser in *Edutopia*, April 3, 2020, <https://edut.to/3as4XtE>

Is Now the Time to Bring Back “Current Events”?

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Robert Pondiscio says that the taken-for-granted body of general knowledge and key vocabulary necessary for literate discourse is constantly evolving. For example, a few months ago, the terms *coronavirus* and *social distancing* would have been unfamiliar even to the well-educated, but now they’re on everyone’s lips. That demonstrates the importance of keeping abreast of current events in school. “But at a time when it’s never been more important to be well-informed and literate,” says Pondiscio, “children have never been less likely to pay close attention.” A recent report found that only 48 percent of children follow the news, current events are not a regular part of classroom discussions, and when civics knowledge is tested, the performance of U.S. students is worse than it is for any other subject.

Pondiscio remembers that almost every day in his working-class school on Long Island, a different student would have the job of reporting the day’s news. There would be an international, national, and local story, then sports and the weather. “Not the most sophisticated pedagogical approach, perhaps,” he says, “but it normalized the idea of paying attention to what’s going on in the world.” This was reinforced at home, where a morning and afternoon newspaper was delivered every day and his parents gave him a subscription to *Time* when he was in seventh grade. “Being informed was just a basic part of everyday life.”

In the midst of the current crisis, with many parents “dragooned into service as *ad hoc* teachers,” says Pondiscio, “the juiciest bit of low-hanging educational fruit might be cultivating children’s interest in news and reviving current events... And it’s a habit, once formed, that can continue as a significant value-add once life and school resume their normal shape, contributing to literacy and language proficiency, as well as cultivating a disposition of civic-mindedness.”

But shouldn’t the young be shielded from disturbing news? Appropriate filtering, yes, says Pondiscio, but he notes that his generation came of age in a divided, violent nation with airline hijackings, assassinations, riots, domestic bombings, and a disturbing body count from several wars. “The idea that children should be shielded from the news might seem odder still to

our parents,” he says, “who came of age during the Great Depression and World War II.” Common Sense Media suggests that seven-year-olds are old enough to watch and make sense of the news. Pondiscio suggests ABC, CBS, and NBC network newscasts rather than “the fire hose of social media and cable news.” And there are news outlets created specifically for young people, including *Time for Kids*, *The Week for Kids*, and Newsela.

“Keep Kids Learning While School Is Out: Bring Back ‘Current Events’” by Robert Pondiscio in *The Education Gadfly*, March 25, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3bDUKLL>

[Back to page one](#)

THE HUMAN SIDE OF ONLINE TEACHING

Nurturing School Climate in a Virtual World

“Although leaders, teachers, and students are not together physically, the climate and culture of the school community continue to exist,” say Jessica Hoffman, Marc Brackett, and Scott Levy (Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence) in this article in *EdSurge News*. “If we do not take steps to actively shape our virtual school climate, it will be shaped for us... Now more than ever, a positive school climate is necessary to help us maintain a school community that supports the wellbeing of faculty, staff, and students and the continuation of high-quality instruction that is paramount to achieving educational goals.”

An organization’s culture is often defined as “the way we do things around here.” In a school, this includes norms and values, the quality of relationships, respect and trust, supportive leadership, celebration of diversity, physical and emotional safety, and effective teaching practices. “You may feel like you have too much on your plate to worry about school climate right now,” say the authors. “But the truth is, school climate *is the plate*. More than 25 years of research tells us that the climate of a school matters; it literally guides how well almost everything gets done.” Schools with a positive culture have better academic and non-academic results.

The pandemic has taken a major physical and emotional toll on educators and students, with anxiety the most frequently mentioned emotion. A positive culture is like a healthy immune system, mitigating the harm that occurs. Negative external forces may expose pre-existing weaknesses in a school’s culture. Given the uncertainty of the months ahead, it’s vital to understand weak points in the culture and build on strengths so adults and students can thrive and be stronger by the time schools reopen. Hoffman, Brackett, and Levy offer these suggestions in several school culture areas:

- Physical and emotional safety:
 - Require password protection for online communities.

- Promulgate a code of conduct for remote learning, including chat boxes and screenshots of meetings.
- Regularly check in with students before launching into academic content.
- Suggest using virtual backgrounds for student and staff privacy.
- Give students easy access to counselors and psychologists.
- Respect for diversity, equity, and inclusion:
 - Understand that students' work environments will vary widely.
 - Be sensitive to financial and health disparities, including Covid-19 cases.
 - Pace academic work to avoid overload.
 - Assign work in a variety of formats.
 - Leverage individual students' tech and design skills.
 - Reach out to family and community resources to enrich the curriculum.
- Relationships:
 - Regularly use synchronous learning to maintain group culture.
 - Orchestrate regular group learning time.
 - Facilitate communication among students' friendship groups.
 - Continue virtual department and faculty meetings and maximize participation in decision making.
 - Do individual check-ins to stay connected with students and colleagues.
- Supportive teaching practices:
 - Set realistic expectations and model patience and compassion.
 - Support educators with PD on remote learning.
 - Give students choice and voice in their learning assignments.
 - Have the curriculum include empathy, responsible decision-making, emotional regulation, conflict resolution, ethics, and citizenship.
- Sense of community:
 - Maintain rituals and routines like morning announcements and a weekly newsletter.
 - Encourage students to share films, speeches, and performances.
 - Use social media to highlight exemplary work by students and staff.
 - Actively communicate with families.

[“How to Foster a Positive School Climate in a Virtual World”](#) by Jessica Hoffman, Marc Brackett, and Scott Levy in *EdSurge News*, May 21, 2020; the authors are at jessica.hoffman@yale.edu, marc.brackett@yale.edu, and scott.r.levy@yale.edu.

Maintaining Relationships with Students While Physically Separated

In this *Edutopia* article, Sarah Gonser reports on strategies she curated from interviews with teachers about how they stay connected with their students during school closures:

- *Frequently saying hello* – Several teachers emphasized the importance of communicating, by video if possible, that you're thinking of students, care for them, and miss them. For students without video access, a phone call is a good substitute.

- *Maintaining morning meetings* – This might be a video of announcements and daily content, with students chiming in, or a recorded meeting that students can watch asynchronously.

- *“Temperature” checks* – One high-school teacher is using Schoology to have his students report on their state of mind: thumb up, thumb sideways (meh), or thumb down. As part of homework, another teacher asks students to check in on a classmate and report back to her by e-mail, text, or Skype. Other teachers are using forms like the one developed by the Association for Middle Level Educators <https://bit.ly/2yvRUdl>.

- *Snail-mail pen pals, phone pals, or virtual turn and talk* – One third-grade teacher uses the Zoom breakout room feature to have students discuss a question in small groups and follows up with one-on-one sessions with students, having them read aloud for a few minutes. At the low-tech end of the spectrum, some teachers are encouraging students to call each other on a rotating basis, or sending home paper, envelopes, and stamps for students to write letters to each other.

- *Creating virtual “tables”* – A North Carolina eighth-grade English teacher is using Google Classroom to get groups of 4-5 students (randomly assigned) discussing assignments, asking each other questions, and staying connected.

- *Including parents* – This same teacher checks in with parents via e-mail every day with questions like “How are you?” and “Do you need anything?” Another teacher connects with parents with the messaging platform Remind or, for parents who don’t have text messaging, a dedicated Google Voice phone line.

- *Naming and processing emotions* – Social isolation, cabin fever, and disrupted routines may be freaking out students, and many teachers are providing avenues for kids to express and explore their thoughts, feelings, and worries – individually or with classmates. As students share, teachers watch for those who are having the most difficulty and following up with individual dialogue and perhaps a counseling referral.

“7 Ways to Maintain Relationships During Your School Closure” by Sarah Gonser in *Edutopia*, March 25, 2020, <https://edut.to/2JKmLW4>

Teaching Social-Emotional Skills At a Distance

In this article in *Education Week*, Arianna Prothero says homebound students “now more than ever need strong coping skills to adjust to this new reality that will likely, for many, extend through the end of the school year and beyond.” The uncertainty and lack of control over the future makes social-emotional learning especially important – but how can educators accomplish that at a distance? Prothero interviewed several SEL experts for their ideas:

- *Psychological distancing* – Ask students to think about helping another young person: “Well, what would I do to support my best friend who was telling me they were really worried about the coronavirus? What would I say to them?” suggests Marc Brackett (Yale University). This gets students out of their own heads, being empathetic and compassionate with another

person – which might surface ideas they could apply to themselves. Students could also be asked to examine their own self-talk and think about whether it’s helpful.

- *Literature* – For younger students, reading stories aloud (synchronously or asynchronously) and discussing the feelings and motivations of characters can be helpful.

- *Current events* – Older students might be asked to reflect on the social-emotional attributes on display among political leaders – self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making – and discussing how and whether these are helping the U.S. through this crisis.

- *Rituals* – It’s a good idea to maintain cherished traditions like spirit week – for example, having students wear crazy socks and sending in photos of them. Journaling is another ritual, with teachers sending prompts to get students reflecting and writing about their feelings. For students without Internet access, cell phones can be the medium.

- *Setting limits* – It’s important to talk about what’s going on in the world, but teachers and families need to avoid overwhelming young people with too much about the pandemic. One step: suggesting to parents that they not have cable news on all the time.

“Teaching SEL When Students Are Home” by Arianna Prothero in *Education Week*, April 8, 2020 (Vol. 39, #29, pp. 14-15), <https://bit.ly/34xNkXX>

Trust and Boundaries

In this paper in *One Trusted Adult*, consultants Brooklyn Raney and Ryan Donaher suggest guidelines for working online with middle- and high-school students in ways that build trust and maintain boundaries. Some excerpts, directly quoted as noted:

- *Clarify intent.* “I care about your health, happiness, safety, and success, and our inability to meet in person doesn’t change that. I believe a routine and a sense of normalcy will help us during this unprecedented time.”

- *Set up for success.* This includes having a daily routine with students, dressing like you’re going to school, sitting at a table, and asking students how you can help them.

- *Build a safe virtual space.* “Do not assume your students will automatically bring classroom norms with them into this venue. Take time to reiterate all of the rules that still apply, and any additional ones that need to be set up in order to protect the safe space needed to learn. Ask for their contributions and feedback to the list.”

- *Be fully present.* “What students will notice more than anything is whether or not you are really with them.” That means not being visibly distracted by phones and other events.

- *Model vulnerability.* “There is no need to pretend you know what you are doing. Ask for their patience and understanding, request their help, and model learning something new at a rapid pace and delivering it before it is fully tested.”

- *Create opportunities to contribute.* “Seek opportunities for them to lead, teach, inspire, and support each other virtually.”

- *Provide structure and predictability.* “Beyond your curriculum and content, consider the fringe moments, the intentional and unintentional connectors that happen in your classroom, that can be creatively translated to your online space.”

- *Reassure and encourage.* “Try to say every name of each of your students every day. Let them hear their name in a positive way, whether as a greeting or being called upon to share. Allow your students an opportunity to be seen, heard, valued, reassured, and encouraged. And never, ever underestimate your role as a trusted adult, even virtually, in the lives of these young people.”

- *Work with two shoulder partners.* “Continue interacting with young people as if their parents are on one of your shoulders, and your direct supervisor is on the other. Then, assume all your virtual interactions are being recorded – would you want this recording to go viral? For your safety and security as an educator, and for the safety of your students, continue building trust with young people through the establishment of boundaries, and create educational moments you would be proud to share.”

“Tips for Maintaining Trust and Boundaries with Virtual Students” by Brooklyn Raney and Ryan Donaher in *One Trusted Adult*, March 2020; Donaher can be reached at ryan.donaher@gmail.com.

Making Remote Learning Human

“In an era of social distancing, we’re all searching for some form of social closeness right now,” says elementary teacher Paul France in this *Edutopia* article. When he previously worked with an ed tech company and a network of micro-schools, France learned that “many digital tools have dehumanizing effects: they chip away at human connection, limit opportunities for heterogeneous groupings and cross-ability collaboration, and have kids turning toward screens instead of their teachers and fellow learners.”

Now that he and most other teachers have no choice but to use digital pedagogy, he has three suggestions for overcoming some of its disadvantages:

- *Embrace authentic tasks.* The temptation now is to take advantage of the convenience of commercial curriculum products, says France. But he believes this is an excellent time “to leverage open-ended tasks, complex instruction, and journaling, allowing students to post pictures of their journal entries through Seesaw or Google Drive.” How about providing a math task with multiple solutions and challenging students to journal about their solutions, or respond to prompts in a reader’s notebook? After students have had time to work on their own, the teacher might host an online class for sharing and discussion.

- *Create opportunities for dialogue and discourse.* “True, deep learning happens not on a worksheet or through a series of decontextualized videos and closed-ended questions,” says France. “Learning is a conversation; it requires connection and interaction.” He urges regular video class meetings for this reason, as well as for social interaction and connection.

- *Build in opportunities for self-reflection.* “Sending home worksheet after worksheet is unlikely to result in fruitful learning that will stick,” says France. “The current crisis is allowing

all of us – educators and parents included – to reflect on what it truly means to learn.” He’s asking his students to think about their learning, and sends them videos of him thinking aloud as he solves math problems and responds to readings. He asks students to make a video of their responses to questions like:

- What went well for you with that task?
- What will you do differently next time?
- How has your thinking changed?

“All of these remind students that learning neither starts nor ends with the activity they’ve completed,” he says. “It can – and will – be connected to future activities, and by taking them through the process of reflecting on the task, I create the expectation that they will need to apply new learnings to future tasks.”

“3 Tips for Humanizing Digital Pedagogy” by Paul France in *Edutopia*, April 1, 2020, <https://edut.to/2JYT183>

Why Teaching in a Virtual Space is Draining

In this *National Geographic* article, Julia Sklar reports that many K-12 and university teachers are finding remote instruction more exhausting than in-person teaching. Cognitive scientists say that virtual interactions are more taxing on the brain – because we’re trying to make up for the copious information we get, without knowing it, during face-to-face interactions.

When we’re physically with others, we’re listening to the words, but also picking up dozens of non-verbal cues – facial expressions, whether the person’s body is facing us or slightly turned away, their fidgeting, perhaps a quick inhalation as a prelude to an interruption. “These cues help paint a holistic picture of what is being conveyed and what’s expected in response from the listener,” says Sklar. “Since humans evolved as social animals, perceiving these cues comes naturally to most of us, takes little conscious effort to parse, and can lay the groundwork for emotional intimacy.”

During a video call, seeing people from the shoulders up, very few of these cues can be perceived, which puts much more cognitive load on listening to what’s being said. We search for non-verbal cues that can’t be seen, and eye contact on the screen can be disconcerting if held too long, which would seldom be the case in a face-to-face conversation.

“Multi-person screens magnify this exhausting problem,” says Sklar. “Gallery view – where all meeting participants appear Brady Bunch-style – challenges the brain’s central vision, forcing it to decode so many people at once that no one comes through meaningfully, not even the speaker.” One psychologist called this attempt to multitask “continuous partial attention,” like trying to cook and read at the same time. A regular telephone conversation is much less taxing because we’re only expecting the voice and we’re not looking for visual cues.

Interestingly, says Sklar, video calls can be a boon for people for whom in-person conversations are challenging – for example, many with autism. However, for others on the

spectrum, video calls can be disconcerting because of sensory triggers such as loud noises and bright lights.

It's possible, concludes Sklar, that "Zoom fatigue will abate once people learn to navigate the mental tangle video chatting can cause." In the meantime, one trick is turning off your camera and concentrating just on the words, saving video images for when they're really necessary – or when we want warm fuzzies from a loved one. Another idea is using a phone for a chat and walking around. There's evidence that meetings on the move can improve creativity.

"'Zoom Fatigue' Is Taxing the Brain. Here's Why That Happens" by Julia Sklar in *National Geographic*, April 24, 2020, <https://on.natgeo.com/2Wxl0BI>

Better Ways of Starting Online Conversations

In this *Quartz* article, Elizabeth Weingarten says that in the early days of the pandemic, she would ask friends and colleagues, "How are you doing right now?" It was an assumption-free way of showing she cared, but people began to respond in predictable ways: *I'm hanging in there... I've got it better than those heroic first responders...* "When we keep asking the same question," says Weingarten, "or no question at all, we lose out on a chance for deeper connections with our conversation partners, who also happen to be the people we care most about. We are tricked into believing we know how they're feeling or what they're thinking, when we haven't even scratched the surface." Here's a selection of her suggested alternatives:

- How are you taking care of yourself today?
- What's the best thing that happened to you today?
- What's the most generous act you've seen recently?
- What's giving you hope right now?
- What's a story – from a book, movie, article, conversation – that you've been gripped by recently? Why did it capture you?
- What habit have you started, or broken, during the quarantine?
- Which specific place in your neighborhood are you most looking forward to visiting when this is all over?
- What are some things you've realized you don't really need?
- What's something you miss that surprises you? What's something you don't miss that surprises you?
- What's the latest thing you experienced that made you laugh, or cry?
- How do you want this experience to change you? How do you think it will?
- What do you hope we all learn or take away from this experience?

"20 Questions to Ask Instead of 'How Are You Doing Right Now?'" by Elizabeth Weingarten in *Quartz*, April 10, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2YzXpmu>

[Back to page one](#)

PEDAGOGICAL ISSUES WITH ONLINE TEACHING

Avenues to Equity Opened by Covid-19

In this article in *The Learning Professional*, consultants Sonia Caus Gleason and Jill Harrison Berg say the pandemic has “revealed to any who might have previously denied it that the work to eliminate educational inequities is far from done.” Many educators see that “what seemed to work for most of their students was not good enough.” Gleason and Berg believe there are four areas where the current crisis has pushed equity-focused educators to expand on their past efforts:

- *Knowing students and families* – Covid-19 has closed traditional avenues of parent communication (the open house and report card conference) and educators have been spurred to reach out via families’ preferred means of communication – e-mail, phone, text – to help them support their children’s academic progress. “If we’re paying attention,” say Gleason and Berg, “we see that this is a new way of learning about the true personalities, living situations, family dynamics, sources of background knowledge, and other individual differences of our students – crucial information to support them effectively.” Lacking informal hallway conversations with colleagues that were often a primary source of information, educators are finding more-systematic ways of sharing insights about students and families. With more information on the table, they can also check on implicit biases and the way the school’s traditions might have created cultural barriers for some families.

- *Inquiry-based teaching* – Unable to use the physical classroom environment as a key aspect of teaching, many educators paid more attention to learning goals and sought new pathways for engaging students – projects and experiential learning and exploring online resources. “Museums, zoos, science labs, and many other institutions have opened their virtual doors,” say Gleason and Berg, “providing unlimited playgrounds for such inquiry-based learning.” In addition, students’ homes can also be tapped as learning resources.

- *Student choice and voice* – Remote learning may be physically distant, but it has opened opportunities to engage students who tuned out during classroom instruction. Choice, individual pacing, and innovative materials are all ways to hook and hold all students.

- *Professional collaboration* – Spurred by necessity, educators have reached out to colleagues in Twitter chats, Pinterest boards, and Facebook groups, expanding their repertoires and sharing ideas in a way that wasn’t always happening before the pandemic.

[“An Opportunity for Equity”](#) by Sonia Caus Gleason and Jill Harrison Berg in *The Learning Professional*, June 2020 (Vol. 41, #3, pp. 18-21); the authors can be reached at sonia@soniacausgleason.org and jhberg@gmail.com.

Insights on Remote Instruction from College Students

In this article in *10X Your Teaching*, Norman Eng (City University of New York) reports what his students found most difficult about online learning this spring:

- Organizing and keeping track of everything – 71%

- Motivating myself to get things done – 62%
- Finding a quiet place to concentrate – 53%
- How often I’m asked to hand in assignments – 47%
- The assignments – 44%
- Tech issues – 18%

It’s interesting that self-organization rather than technology was the number one concern.

Reflecting on this, Eng’s takeaway as a teacher was:

- Keep a routine so students know what to expect.
- Keep everything in one place.
- Keep sending reminders.

It’s also important to check in with students – which he did. Some insights from students:

- Clear, prompt communication means everything to students. This includes skillful, explicit instruction, ready access to materials, and always responding to e-mails.
- The quality of lectures and assignments is a key factor in student motivation and focus. “Do not make your assignments boring and long,” wrote one student, and others remarked on the distractions and temptations of being at home.

- It takes longer to do things online. Many students said they were in a state of high anxiety and felt burdened by their instructors’ demands. Some were pestered by their parents to do chores. “It’s so sad that I can’t even relax in my own house,” said one.

- The debate about synchronous and asynchronous learning continues. Students found synchronous classes difficult to manage, and appreciated the autonomy of doing assignments and listening to recorded lessons on their own schedule. “The downside of having an asynchronous class,” said one student, “is that we have to be more responsible for teaching ourselves the content... I believe I’m teaching myself incorrect information if it’s all up to me.” To teach effectively online, teachers need to provide an appropriate amount of synchronous instruction; hold regular office hours; and respond promptly to e-mails.

[“What Frustrates Students Most About Online Classes \(Covid-19 Edition\)”](#) by Norman Eng in *10X Your Teaching*, May 17, 2020

[Back to page one](#)

8. A Poll of College Educators on Teaching During the Pandemic

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, Audrey Williams June reports on a *Chronicle* poll of how colleges dealt with remote learning this spring. The survey was conducted in mid-May and included 935 professors and other instructors and 595 academic administrators.

Some major findings on struggles:

- Students’ access to technology or WiFi – 65% of instructors, 77% of administrators
- Juggling work with personal needs – 52% of instructors, 69% of administrators
- Technical obstacles, unfamiliarity - 37% of instructors, 84% of administrators

Instructors’ assessment of the quality of their courses during the pandemic:

- Much worse – 10%

- Moderately worse – 49%
- Equivalent – 37%
- Superior – 4%

Instructors' assessment of the remote teaching experience:

- Mostly positive – 27%
- Somewhat positive – 39%
- Somewhat negative – 25%
- Mostly negative – 10%

Instructors' level of confidence about teaching entirely or mostly online this fall:

- Very confident – 27%
- Somewhat confident – 47%
- Not very confident – 19%
- Not at all confident – 8%

Instructors on whether they look forward to returning to in-person teaching in the fall:

- Strongly agree – 47%
- Somewhat agree – 25%
- Somewhat disagree – 14%
- Strongly disagree – 14%

Instructors' confidence in their institution's ability to maintain social-distancing safeguards:

- Very confident – 10%
- Somewhat confident – 34%
- Not very confident – 33%
- Not at all confident – 23%

The biggest struggle: 8 of 10 instructors said “creating a sense of engagement between myself and my students” was very or somewhat challenging. The most important lessons learned? “I need a lot more experience/training to do it again,” said one respondent.

“Was Remote Learning a Success?” by Audrey Williams June in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 12, 2020 (Vol. 66, #31, p. 9)

Building All Students' Brainpower During Remote Learning

In this *Mind/Shift* article, Amielle Major draws on the work of Zaretta Hammond to suggest ways educators can meet students' needs during a period of online learning – especially those with disadvantages. For starters, Major broadens the definition of culturally responsive instruction: it's not just teaching multicultural content and addressing historical inequities, she says. At its core, it's about helping students become independent learners, addressing both the affective and cognitive, and building an academic mindset by pushing back on dominant narratives about students who aren't doing as well.

How can teachers accomplish this as schools work remotely? Hammond believes it means borrowing the best practices of Montessori and project-based learning in a way that repositions students as leaders of their own learning. “By giving students more agency,” says

Major, “the idea is to disrupt old routines around teaching and learning that make the student dependent on the teacher for receiving knowledge.” Three specific strategies:

- Deepen background knowledge. Always connect it with students’ prior knowledge and interests and have them put new knowledge and skills to work in meaningful projects;
- Cultivate cognitive routines. “Be the personal trainer of their cognitive development,” says Hammond, by including a routine set of prompts with each assignment. Possible questions: *How does this part fit into the whole? What are the parts of this whole?*
- Increase word wealth. “Building a student’s vocabulary is a key tool in equity strategies for schools,” says Major. Students should connect with their interests, engage in word play, and use games like Scrabble, Heads Up, Taboo, and even word searches.

[“How to Develop Culturally Responsive Teaching for Distance Learning”](#) by Amielle Major in *Mind/Shift*, May 20, 2020

5. Using Videos for Remote Teacher Coaching

In this *Learning Forward* article, Laura Baecher (Hunter College/CUNY) suggests that while instruction is taking place online, lesson videos may be the best way for supervisors to observe and coach teachers. “Video observation may be particularly useful now,” she says, “since many educators are on a steep learning curve figuring out new tools, technologies, and techniques for the distance learning context.”

But how it’s handled is important; being filmed can make teachers feel exposed and vulnerable, and anything that adds to teachers’ stress level during the Covid-19 crisis is not helpful. Baecher has the following suggestions:

- *Take advantage of the benefits of video.* When teachers can watch a classroom video with a supervisor or instructional coach, they may notice, comment on, and dissect a lesson in a way that’s not possible when they’re a passive recipient of the observer’s feedback. In addition, the video can be replayed (perhaps more than once) to look more carefully at a teaching move or a student’s comment, or to rethink an erroneous impression.

- *Leverage the features of remote learning.* All that’s required to record a synchronous lesson is to hit the Record button in the videoconferencing program (compare this to the work of setting up a video camera in an in-person classroom). An added advantage is that recorded lessons can be shared later with students who were absent. Asynchronous slides and thumbnail videos can also be viewed together with supervisors and instructional coaches. It’s possible for observers to “drop in” on synchronous lessons with none of the steps involved in a brick-and-mortar school. And observations aren’t limited to a school building, says Baecher: “A chemistry teacher in California can peer-observe, coach, or be coached by another chemistry teacher in New York, or even in Vietnam or Brazil.”

- *Keep it low-stakes.* Conducting formal observations while teachers navigate uncharted waters can raise the anxiety level. Baecher suggests a more low-key, non-evaluative approach:

- Invite teachers to review a recorded lesson and materials using a self-reflection tool, reflecting on student engagement and whether this might be a model lesson for the 2020-21 school year.
- Invite peers, coaches, and supervisors to reflect. A videoed lesson and accompanying artifacts can be the jumping-off point for an informal discussion of what worked and what might be changed.
- Invite teachers to share their classroom sites. Using tools like Screencastify, teachers can give a virtual tour of their asynchronous materials and invite comments. “In many instances,” says Baecher, “teachers who are comfortable and skilled in digital tools are better ‘staff developers’ than instructional technologists who may not be currently teaching in this stressful period.”

[“When Learning Online, Leverage the Power of Video Observation to Improve Practice”](#) by Laura Baecher in *Learning Forward*, May 26, 2020; Baecher can be reached at lbaecher@hunter.cuny.edu.

[Back to page one](#)

A Veteran Online Teacher Shares What He’s Learned

“Ultimately, we want students to take ownership of and lead their learning, and that’s even more necessary in a virtual space,” says teacher/consultant John McCarthy in this article in *Edutopia*. Here’s what McCarthy has learned from years of virtual teaching:

- *Develop a plan for students’ asynchronous work.* A great benefit of virtual instruction is that students can choose when and how many times they’ll watch videos (including teacher lectures), read texts, answer questions, and submit responses to be viewed by peers and teachers. Communication can be via message boards, e-mail, and instant messaging. Not all students can handle this flexibility at first, so teacher monitoring and guidance are essential. McCarthy suggests:

- Establish structures and milestones to help students manage time and deliverables.
- Provide a variety of assignments and a choice of response formats – definitely not a steady diet of worksheets!
- Make the content relevant to authentic purposes outside school.
- Curate and publish students’ work (perhaps in a Google folder) for a target audience, perhaps a community organization (this may require parent permission).

Everything should build students’ ability to work independently and take increasing responsibility for managing their time and monitoring their own work.

- *Use synchronous meetings for live support.* This can be all-class meetings (not lectures, which are best conveyed as videos), chats with half the class at a time, small-group tutoring, one-on-one coaching, and office hours. The goals of strategically timed live connections are (a) addressing learning gaps picked up by assessments, and (b) encouraging in-depth learning by addressing core concepts, stimulating real-time discussion, pointing out misconceptions and misunderstandings, encouraging students to speak up about what they know and what they don’t understand, and showing models of good thinking and speaking.

• *Give prompt and responsive feedback.* “When students are working on their own, gaps in understanding happen,” says McCarthy, “so they really need feedback for revisions.” His suggestions:

- Commit to replying to students’ e-mails, texts, and instant messages within 30-120 minutes.
- When students are responding to each other’s posts, chime in, conveying: *I am supervising what you’re posting and I’m interested in your work.*
- Respond to students’ submitted assignments within 24-48 hours.

Online learning has the potential, perhaps more than in-school work, for students getting timely, helpful feedback from peers and instructors and continuously improving their work.

• *Make time for relationships.* “Remember that working from home for many students is a more challenging adjustment for them than it is for you,” says McCarthy. “We do not know everything that is a stressor at home. Be a supporter, not another obstacle.” He suggests checking in with every student every week through offline and real-time conversations, including the all-important question: “How are you doing?”

[“4 Key Aspects of Teaching an Online Class”](#) by John McCarthy in *Edutopia*, April 24, 2020

School Closures As an Opportunity for Young Adolescents to Flourish

In this *New York Times* article, author Judith Warner says that early adolescents seem to be hard-wired “to bond with friends, flirt, judge, rank, rebel, and separate into in-group and out-group peer hierarchies... Adults don’t tend to much like kids of middle-school age. They roll their eyes at us and snarl. They watch us with a gaze newly awakened to all our hypocrisies and foibles.”

But Warner is not convinced that meanness, social drama, and alienation from adults are inevitable for this age group. “Middle school is a time when all sorts of new abilities kick in,” she says: “new powers of observation, critical thinking, reason, and reflection. Believe it or not, there’s even a new capacity for empathy, and a strong sense of injustice.”

And all these latent abilities, Warner believes, can be unleashed during the pandemic. She’s hearing about kids who, not long ago, “were accusing parents of trying to ruin their lives by keeping them home,” but are now reading, pursuing new interests, researching the history of plagues, taking music lessons, inventing games (including Covidopoly), rediscovering old friends, even talking on the phone. And some middle-schoolers are finding their teachers’ online instruction *not bad*.

The key to some kids’ good side being unveiled during the pandemic, Warner believes, is less pressure. But not everyone gets that. “Schools need to cut them a break,” she says. “Assign less homework. Let kids take classes pass-fail, as many colleges are doing. Make teachers and guidance counselors available for Zoom, Facetime, or even just old-fashioned phone calls for support.” Of course some boundaries are needed to keep the negatives under control: for starters, how about schools and parents agreeing on limiting social media to certain times of day?

[“Ease the Pressure on Our Middle Schoolers”](#) by Judith Warner in *The New York Times*, May 3, 2020; Warner’s new book is *And Then They Stopped Talking to Me: Making Sense of Middle School* (Crown, 2020)

Why Remote Learning Has Been a Boon for Some Students

In this *Edutopia* article, Nora Fleming reports on conversations with dozens of teachers who have been surprised that some students who were not doing well before the pandemic are thriving now: for example, class clowns, students who are hyperactive, shy, or highly creative. “It’s been awesome to see some of my kids finally find their niche in education,” said a California high-school teacher.

That’s clearly not the norm, cautions Fleming. Many students are struggling with remote learning, there are homes without Internet, devices, or both, and it’s hard for teachers to replicate in-person dynamics. But a significant number of teachers described reasons that some students were doing better with online learning:

- *Self-pacing* – Learning at home has allowed students to work at a much more leisurely pace, often with a lot of choice in how they organize time – a welcome change from the relentless, micromanaged schedule of the normal school day. “The reason I enjoy online learning,” said one tenth grader in a class survey, “is because of the opportunity to structure my day efficiently. I am able to work out, relax, and complete the work in a timely manner, with no distractions.”

- *Fewer activities* – When school is in session, many secondary-school students are overscheduled– club activities during lunch, sports, after-school activities, volunteering, part-time jobs. With almost all of that shut down, there’s time to focus on schoolwork – and be less stressed. One high-school teacher called it “an amazing respite for so many students.”

- *Lower stakes* – With more-lenient policies on grading and the cancellation of standardized tests, students are under less pressure. Said a Virginia middle-school teacher, “One student told me he likes remote learning better because he no longer feels the extreme pressure of failing. He says that now that the pressure of state testing is off, he feels he can really learn.”

- *Less bullying and chatter* – According to one survey taken before the pandemic, at least 20 percent of students report being bullied at school; home learning provides a safe haven from most of that. For many students, socializing can be distracting – the pressure to “look good” and fit in socially. An Alabama psychology teacher said, “The online environment may allow for voices to be heard without the added bit of social anxiety.”

- *Sleep* – “I have the time to sleep eight hours a night every night,” said a California high-school junior. Enough said.

[“Why Are Some Kids Thriving During Remote Learning?”](#) by Nora Fleming in *Edutopia*, April 24, 2020

Why One Middle-School Student Prefers Online Instruction

In this *New York Times* article, eighth grader Veronique Mintz says she isn't missing in-person schooling during the pandemic. Why? Because every day in her New York City middle school, she says that classmates disrespect teachers, blurt out answers during tests, destroy materials, roll around on the floor, and push, kick, and hit one another. Her math teacher seems to spend one-third of every class struggling with discipline. Attending this school for almost three years, Mintz says she's had "only a few teachers who had strong command of their classrooms – enforcing consistent rules, treating students fairly, and earning their respect."

Now that the school has to use distance learning, she says she can work at her own pace, isn't distracted by nonsense, and finds cooperative groups much more productive. Mintz is also enjoying the recorded lessons posted online by teachers, who do better in this medium than in person. Mintz, who admits she struggles with math, can stop, start, and replay sections until she understands. It's so much better to grasp the lesson the day it's taught rather than having to try getting her questions answered by the teacher before school the next day. Weekly office hours are also a boon, especially since there are only two or three other students taking part. The school's experiment with live video teaching, on the other hand, hasn't been very successful for Mintz; "The same teachers who struggle to manage students in the classroom," she says, "also struggle online."

What are the implications for in-person instruction when schools reopen? This forward-thinking student has three suggestions:

- Teachers should video-record all lessons and send them to all students after class.
- Teachers should offer weekly office hours for individual and small-group follow-up.
- Teachers who are good at classroom management should be paid to train colleagues.

"Learning Online Beats School" by Veronique Mintz in *The New York Times*, May 7, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/2SYvNDY>

Classroom Management When Students Are in Their PJs

In this article in *Education Week Teacher*, Madeline Will reports on how some teachers are dealing with limit-setting in a remote learning environment. "It's a situation where we need to extend grace," said Merisha Leak, a North Carolina educator. "I don't think it's a school's right or a teacher's right to enforce school rules in someone's home."

But many teachers in a survey said it was challenging to keep students focused online. One approach is to lay down the law. "Remember," stated one teacher's Zoom rules, "this is a class, so treat it as such. Find a quiet place, free from distraction (sibling, pets, parents, television). Video needs to remain ON to promote focus. Eye contact should be maintained. Refrain from chewing gum, eating, or drinking in front of the camera." Another teacher said that students who didn't abide by the rules would be removed from the virtual classroom and given a zero.

Somewhere in the middle is Leah Smith, a Connecticut middle-school teacher who believes "the last thing they need is to have somebody be super strict with them." Her guidelines

for students: mute your microphone while others are talking, don't purposely distract classmates (no TikTok dance moves on video), and above all be kind and respectful. Smith is tolerant of students munching during classes and being on their beds, as long as they're sitting up. She had students show off their pets in an early class, and when a cat walked across the screen during a class, she said, "Oh, cute cat," and moved on. "To not accept some of those funny moments is not really conducive to teaching middle school," said Smith, "but at the same time, it needs to be harnessed so you can get things done."

Teachers' morale is also taking a hit, and many need some bucking up. "I think we really should remind teachers that they're doing a great job, this is uncharted territory, and we're all figuring this out," said Ryann Fapohunda, a Washington, DC educator. "I would really encourage them to adopt a less-is-more approach. What success may have looked like when they're physically in school will look different now... If students are adhering to guidelines in class – participating and showing up – I'm inclined to not call them out for wearing a hoodie or being in pajama pants."

"Expectations for Online Student Behavior During Coronavirus School Closures" by Madeline Will in *Education Week Teacher*, April 8, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2KeqZWI>

Teachers' Concerns About Online Instruction

In this article in *Education Week*, Peter DeWitt reports what he's found combing through scores of Facebook pages created by teachers during the pandemic. He's struck by heroic efforts to make teaching work in a new environment, along with humor and mutual support. There's also a lot of venting about how hard this is: many teachers have their own children to contend with, live in studio apartments, have to work in their bedrooms because of roommates, have spotty Internet access, and are new to videoconferencing tools and the whole business of teaching online.

Among the top concerns on the Facebook pages are students not handing in assignments, parents not returning calls, and how to hold students accountable when districts have nixed grading. There's also uncertainty about the required work day, faculty meetings, and supervision by administrators. Teachers clearly miss the accountability tools that go with in-person classrooms, among them physical proximity, the promise of good grades, and the leverage of privileges and other incentives. "There is a lot less 'control' on the part of the teacher right now," says DeWitt, "and that can make us uncomfortable – especially when teachers are being held accountable as teachers."

One of the most frequently mentioned concerns is worry about students who are not signing in and participating in online instruction. DeWitt believes there are at least six reasons:

- No Internet access and/or computer at home;
- No quiet space to work;
- No grade incentives;
- Taking care of siblings while parents work;
- Full-time jobs providing vital income to their families;

- A weak teacher-student relationship: “Some students are not connecting because they felt invisible while they were in the physical classroom, so they feel that they will not be missed in the virtual one,” says DeWitt.

The most interesting question he found in the Facebook pages: *Knowing what you know now, would you have done anything differently when the students were in front of you?* This question prompted ideas on how schools might be run differently when they reopen.

“6 Reasons Students Aren’t Showing Up for Virtual Learning” by Peter DeWitt in *Education Week*, April 26, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3dcM13W>

Synchronous versus Asynchronous Instruction

In this article in *Education Week*, Mark Lieberman says teachers across the U.S. are facing a novel question: *When and how often during the school day do my students need to see me?* In other words, how much of daily instruction should be synchronous and how much asynchronous? Lieberman gathered ideas from several experts:

- *Don’t waste students’ time.* “It doesn’t make a lot of sense to do a 15-minute lecture live,” says Susan Patrick (Aurora Institute). Asynchronous communication (e-mails, text messages, videos) is efficient for basic instruction, launching a discussion, and setting deadlines. Synchronous communication (a videoconference) works best for discussions, sharing ideas, brainstorming, and spontaneous conversations. A big advantage of asynchronous lectures is that students can watch at their own pace, rewinding if necessary or watching more than once to fully grasp the content.

- *Don’t go overboard with synchronous teaching.* Overly long live classes can be overstimulating for students and maddening for teachers. “Expecting students to be glued to their computers all day is especially unrealistic in households with more children than devices,” says Lieberman. “So relying too much on this approach could contribute to equity gaps, with students who have easy access to technology getting an edge over those who don’t.”

- *Asynchronous learning allows flexible pacing.* Teachers can use a variety of approaches: an interactive game, a practice quiz, a supplementary video. Students can feel a kind of ownership of their learning that’s not possible in classroom settings, feeling less rushed by their classmates and able to go over material at their own speed.

- *Give parents clear direction.* There are big differences in how parents should be working with elementary students (lots of structure) and what’s appropriate for high-school students who might, for example, choose to do all their English work on Sunday and all their math on Monday.

- *Synchronous learning can be informal.* Teachers might conduct virtual office hours, inviting students to join them between certain times, or arrange for an optional lunch chat. Real-time class meetings or kick-offs for the day are especially helpful for younger students.

- *Choose the best modality for different subjects and lessons.* English might be best taught asynchronously when students are doing a lot of thinking and writing on their own. Math,

on the other hand, might lend itself more to synchronous instruction, when students need to ask questions and get real-time help.

- *Asynchronous doesn't mean absent.* Because some students won't take the initiative to get in touch, teachers need to be systematic about setting up individual video or phone check-ins, perhaps several times a month for each student.

- *Teaching is different for the time being.* Effective synchronous teaching can be powerful, but it's often difficult to engage students at the level of in-person classes, and this frustrates teachers. For many, online teaching is more facilitative. "You're not leading through the learning process," says Illinois curriculum director Jennifer Kolar Burden, "you're guiding them, you're pointing them in the right direction, you're letting them explore on their own."

"Virtual Education Dilemma: Scheduled Classroom Instruction vs. Anytime Learning" by Mark Lieberman in *Education Week*, March 30, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2VKeJn0>

Keeping Track of What's Happening in Online Breakout Rooms

(Originally titled "Practical Tips for Teaching Online Small-Group Discussions")

In this *ASCD Express* article. Rhonda Bondie (Harvard Graduate School of Education) says that in virtual small-group discussions, students sometimes don't remember or stick to the prompt, and teachers find it difficult to monitor what's going on. Bondie has three suggestions:

- *Note-catchers* – Students in each breakout room enter their names in a Google Doc table and one student jots notes as the discussion proceeds. The teacher can monitor these docs, provide real-time written feedback, and if a group seems confused or off task, the teacher can "enter" the room and provide "in-person" support. It's helpful if the discussion prompt is clear upfront, note-catchers have good instructions and an exemplar of what their product should look like, and the teacher lets students know when they're close to the end of breakout time.

- *Pre-assignments* – These might consist of a few slides to prepare students for breakout discussions, prompting them to gather ideas and pose questions to classmates. Students can also add videos, pictures, or text to improve the quality of breakout discussions. Bondie suggests Flipgrid and VoiceThread as helpful tools.

- *Feedback surveys* – "It is very challenging to observe the body language of the whole class throughout an online session," says Bondie, "and it's also hard to know how students felt about the process of the discussion in the breakout rooms." That's why it's important to block out 5-10 minutes right afterward and use the chat function to get immediate feedback.

["Practical Tips for Teaching Online Small-Group Discussions"](#) by Rhonda Bondie in *ASCD Express*, April 23, 2020 (Vol. 15, #16); Bondie is at rhonda_bondie@gse.harvard.edu.

Grading Dilemmas in the Time of Coronavirus

In this article in *Education Week*, Stephen Sawchuk covers the debate on whether students should get grades during school closures. On one hand, there's the unfairness of penalizing students who don't have computers and/or robust Internet access at home; on the

other, there's the danger of communicating that students don't have to take school seriously while instruction is online. The current situation forces educators to consider all the reasons for giving grades: to motivate students to apply themselves; to give them feedback on proficient and less-than-proficient work; to report subject-area mastery to parents; for student-to-student comparisons (for college admission, for example); and more. Sawchuk reports on different approaches around the U.S.:

- *Mountain Empire* – This sprawling 1,700-student California district includes three Native American reservations, and there is a wide range of Internet access. Teachers are assigning interdisciplinary projects on topics of interest that students can work on over several days, but because of differences in Internet access, teacher-student interactions vary widely. Because of that, the district is recommending that as long as students participate, they should get the grades they were receiving in each subject before schools closed. Students who want to improve on previous grades have the option to do so.

- *Salem City* – In this small district in Virginia, every student has a Chromebook and virtually all have Internet access, thanks to 200 WiFi hotspots and a local cable company providing access to students whose families qualify for free and reduced-price meals. After spring break, teachers aim to cover the most essential of the remaining state standards for their subject via remote learning, and will give letter grades for students' work. Teachers have been asked to stagger instruction and assignments so students aren't slammed with too much work at once. At the end of the school year, students will be able to appeal grades they believe don't reflect their achievement, making the case that those grades should be counted as pass/fail and not be part of GPA calculations.

- *Highline* – This Washington district, whose students speak over 100 different languages, will give pass/no credit grades for the period of online learning and will give students who don't pass other opportunities to earn credit in the summer or later. Many colleges appear to be willing to accept pass/fail or pass/no credit reports.

- *Los Angeles* – The second-largest district in the U.S. says teachers should "continue to grade and give timely feedback to students," but officials haven't yet decided what will go on transcripts.

- *New York City* expects teachers to give grades for remote work, but says there is flexibility to adapt if students don't have access to devices or outside learning supports.

- *New York City math teacher Bobson Wong* says, "I feel like the most important thing I want to accomplish right now, is to establish a routine in this environment and a sense of order and progress that we are actually moving forward, and this is not just 13 days of busywork." Wong is finding the pace is slower because of the difficulty of checking for understanding and following up with students who are not getting it. He's leery of giving grades, but believes it's important to give students feedback on their level of mastery. "Grades aren't a judgment of character," he says, but students need to know if they need to do additional work to achieve mastery.

- *Arizona, Idaho, Illinois, Ohio, Oregon, Mississippi, Virginia, and Wisconsin* have waived various graduation requirements, including certain mandated courses, end-of-course

exams, and minimum attendance hours. Many states are allowing districts to decide whether students have met graduation requirements. [New York state announced on April 6, 2020 that spring Regents exams have been cancelled.]

- *In Georgia*, more than 70,000 students have signed a petition asking the state to void fourth-quarter GPAs. Says organizer Ellison Gonzalez, “Without the proper help from teachers or having the ability to actively question teachers and receiving rapid responses, students are not truly learning, but rather grabbing the information temporarily.”

“Grading Students During the Coronavirus Crisis: What’s the Right Call?” by Stephen Sawchuk in *Education Week*, April 1, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2UKzQ8a>

Douglas Reeves Pushes Back on Pass/Fail Grading in High Schools

(Originally titled “A Dissent on Pass/Fail Grading in Remote Learning”)

In this *ASCD Inservice* article, author/consultant Douglas Reeves agrees with much of Joe Feldman’s recent article on how to handle grading during the coronavirus crisis: stop averaging grades, grading homework, and using the zero-to-100 scale. Reeves also agrees on using pass/fail grading for students in grades K-8, where feedback is more important than letter grades. But he disagrees with pass/fail for high-school students. Here’s why:

- *Equity* – It’s been argued that until everyone has access to technology and supports, students should all get the same grade or be graded pass/fail. But Reeves fears that this approach disadvantages students who have achieved academic distinction and are competing for scholarships and college admission. “The students who are hurt worst in this scenario,” he says, “are those for whom academic distinction is the only way out of poverty.”

- *Resources* – Given the financial straits in which colleges now find themselves, says Reeves, scholarships will be more competitive than ever. Pass/fail grading makes it impossible for higher education officials to distinguish between A work and D work. He advocates a full-court press to deliver instructional material to all students through online learning, public television, e-mail, phone calls, and mailing books, supplies, and other materials. For students who can’t be reached, Reeves suggests giving them credit for the latest and best evidence of their work up to the time schools closed.

- *Engagement* – “Grades are surely not the only motivator for students,” says Reeves. “Students can be motivated by feedback, learning, and personal relationships with teachers.” This can come through sophisticated online learning platforms or good old-fashioned phone calls. But grades remain meaningful goalposts for students.

“A Dissent on Pass/Fail Grading in Remote Learning” by Douglas Reeves in *ASCD Inservice*, April 22, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2VGaJUe>; Reeves is at douglas.reeves@creativeleadership.net.

A Student Ponders Cheating on an Honor-Code Final Exam

In this *New York Times* column on ethical dilemmas, Kwame Anthony Appiah responds to a college student who's about to take an online final exam. The student is considering breaking the rules and consulting notes, friends, and the Internet because many classmates seem to be doing just that. Appiah disapproves of cheating, even when "everyone else is doing it," but says the best solution is for the professor to give an open-book exam. "Doing this might require changing the test," he says. "But given the circumstances you describe, it may be the only responsible option. If the professor insists on ignoring these realities, however, you should still do the honest thing. Ethics is always, in part, about what kind of person you ought to be."

"The Ethicist: If My Classmates Are Going to Cheat on an Online Exam, Why Can't I?" by Kwame Anthony Appiah in *The New York Times*, April 12, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/39ZFqb6>

Should We Worry About Kids Getting Too Much Screen Time?

In this *New York Times* article, Andrew Przybylski (University of Oxford) and psychologist/author Pete Etchells say that with most schools closed, children's screen time is going through the roof. That can be a blessing for parents cooped up with their kids 24/7, but wait a minute: isn't this video game binging and smartphone indulging harming young people? In the last few years, say Przybylski and Etchells, we've been hearing that excessive screen time "melts our children's brains, shrinks their attention spans, and weakens their social skills." Digital abstinence for young children was the message from the American Academy of Pediatrics until quite recently.

Worries like these have a long history, with parents fretting about each new wave of entertainment technology – radio, movies, TV. But is viewing time all that damaging? For starters, say Przybylski and Etchells, "the evidence linking screens to harm is, in reality, paper thin." Recent studies have downplayed negative effects, including on adolescents' sleep. In fact, they say, "a couple of hours of screen-based leisure is associated with improved peer relationships and increased sociality. Gaming meets our fundamental needs for exploration, competence, and social connection. And games often improve rather than undermine our reasoning abilities." As for concerns about kids getting isolated, the Internet "is the world's best tool for distanced socializing."

So parents and educators needn't fret too much during the coronavirus lockdown, conclude Przybylski and Etchells. But they should monitor what kids are watching and playing, sometimes playing and watching with them, and steer kids toward "brainy games," age-appropriate educational videos, documentaries available on streaming services, cooperative and team-oriented video games, and timeless films "that don't just entertain, or distract, but teach ineffable lessons about life, love, and family."

"Screen Time Isn't All That Bad" by Andrew Przybylski and Pete Etchells in *The New York Times*, April 7, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/2KkHYGw>; Przybylski can be reached at andy.przybylski@oii.ox.ac.uk

Angela Duckworth on Minimizing Screen Time

“It’s mind-boggling to imagine how many hours our students are spending on screens,” says Angela Duckworth (University of Pennsylvania) in this article in *Education Week*. “The scientific consensus is that more rigorous research is needed to pinpoint the effects of screen time on physical and emotional health. However, we know enough to say with certainty that staring at screens all day and night can strain the eyes and disrupt circadian rhythms, too. And certainly, sitting constantly – as opposed to moving our bodies – is unhealthy for kids and adults alike.” Duckworth has three suggestions:

- Consider having students listen to audio versus watching videos, perhaps while taking a safe walk in the neighborhood.
- Encourage notetaking by hand rather than on a computer.
- During an online class, periodically ask students to look away from the screen – for example, “Now, from memory, redraw the figure we discussed last week.”

“How to Decrease Screen Time for Students” by Angela Duckworth in *Education Week*, April 24, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Y51kYa>; Duckworth can be reached at duckwort@psych.upenn.edu.

Embracing the New Normal in Videoconference Job Interviews

In this *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, search consultant Kim Brettschneider says that virtual interviews have advantages (no travel, for one thing), but she’s also seen a number of snafus, including:

- The camera focusing on a candidate’s shiny forehead;
- A pet, an unmade bed, or a naked toddler in the background;
- The candidate, thinking he is on mute, shouting at a spouse to be quiet and telling a child to “go pee;”
- Candidates putting on eye makeup, sneezing onto the screen, and summoning kids to manage the technology;
- Committee members, thinking they’re on mute, talking about the candidate.

“Some of those mistakes are recoverable and some aren’t,” says Brettschneider, “yet most are entirely avoidable.” Her suggestions:

- *Consider an artificial background.* If an attractive, office-like background or a plain wall isn’t available, use a virtual backdrop from your video service. Not a forest or a beach, though, and keep in mind that if a curious pet or a bored spouse gets within two feet of the camera, they will unexpectedly “pop” through the virtual background. It’s a good idea to do interviews behind a locked door, or perhaps with a child sitting next to you with “work” and crayons, and introduce him or her at the beginning of your interview.

- *If life happens, roll with it.* “Pick up your toddler, give your dog a bone, and continue with the interview,” advises Brettschneider. “Everyone is much more understanding of awkward live moments during this time of quarantine.” Such moments may even work to your advantage, making a human connection.

• *Make muting the default.* “Play it safe if you are worried about a sudden meow, bickering children, or loud blenders in the background,” says Brettschneider. Mute your sound and have a finger on the unmute button (in Zoom, it’s the space bar) so you can speak on cue. In addition, shut down e-mail and online chat programs.

• *Practice like a TV analyst.* It’s a good idea to rehearse talking points beforehand, perhaps recording yourself and watching with a critical eye. But for the actual interview, Brettschneider says, “what matters most is to be fully attentive... and ready to improvise based on what you hear. Active listening is even more important in a video interview because you can’t take in as many visual cues as you do in a face-to-face conversation.”

• *Have your notes on the screen.* Be familiar with how to minimize your image so you can sneak a peek at important lists you’ve prepared.

• *Make eye contact with the camera.* Center your torso on the screen, look up at where the camera is, and glance only occasionally at notes and the faces of interviewers.

• *Have your own name at the bottom of your screen.* If you’re using someone else’s computer, be sure to change it in settings, and consider doing a dry run of the interview with a critical friend to pick up any other possible distractions.

• *Be prepared for a connection freeze.* This happens, and if it does, have your cellphone handy (silenced) with the main interviewer’s number programmed in so you can make a quick call while you reboot and reconnect. It’s also wise to pause after each answer in case there’s an audio lag, giving interviewers a chance to follow up without being interrupted.

• *Smile early and often.* “You are on camera with your future colleagues,” Brettschneider concludes. “Smile (naturally), sit up straight, and speak clearly. Enjoy the chance to talk about your proudest moments... In some ways, a flat screen levels the playing field and allows more equal opportunity to shine in an interview setting and demonstrate advantages.”

[“How to Ace the Virtual Interview”](#) by Kim Brettschneider in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, May 15, 2020 (Vol. 66, #29, pp. 37-38)

A New York City K-8 School’s Mission for Right Now

Franklin Headley shares the mission that his music-themed school in Queens has adopted for the current era (adapted from the goals articulated by principal Steve Evangelista at Harlem Link Charter School):

- Ensure a community of care for all students, families, staff members, and alumni.
- Improve our remote learning environment so that it simulates as much of the regular school day experience as possible, in order to mitigate the loss of learning and community, while carefully instituting a virtual school that will not overwhelm the resources of families and staff.
- Provide targeted supports for at-risk students and families.

VOICE Charter School’s Mission for Online Teaching, personal communication from Franklin Headley, April 6, 2020; Headley can be reached at FranklinHeadley@voicecharterschool.org.

PLANNING FOR SCHOOL REOPENING

Handling Learning Loss in the Fall

In this article in *Education Week*, Stephen Sawchuk reports that commercial testing companies are hawking diagnostic assessments to be given when schools reopen. “Not so fast,” said the superintendents and assessment experts he interviewed. Here’s what they said:

- *Don’t use state tests or off-the-shelf exams as a diagnostic tool.* Such tests are not helpful for pinpointing students’ strengths and weaknesses on the content teachers will be covering in the fall. Assessments should be closely aligned with the upcoming curriculum and tell teachers what they need to know as they begin each unit.

- *Support teachers in developing and using formative assessments.* PD and coaching should focus on day-by-day and minute-by-minute assessments that measure student learning and allow teachers to adapt and fine-tune instruction in real time. British assessment guru Dylan Wiliam suggests that teachers ask “range-finding” questions at the beginning of lessons to find out what students already know and what gaps need to be filled. “Most people think that the purpose of feedback is to improve the work,” says Wiliam. “But in fact, it’s to improve the student’s performance on a task not yet attempted. Feedback is designed to make you play better for the next day.”

- *Connect teachers across grades.* The most helpful information for an eighth-grade English teacher will come from the seventh-grade teacher, who can tell which students never read *Romeo and Juliet*, who didn’t write a persuasive essay, and which students were disconnected while schools were closed. Another way to ensure grade-to-grade continuity is looping – teachers moving up with their class to the next grade.

- *Focus on filling curriculum gaps.* Each grade-level team needs to know what wasn’t taught during the spring because of lost time or challenges with remote learning – and then plan how to integrate the missing pieces into their 2020-21 learning plan.

- *Resist the urge to reteach.* The consensus among educators Sawchuk interviewed was that teachers should forge ahead with grade-level curriculum rather than backtrack to what might not have been learned in the spring. The only exception is one-to-one tutoring, where filling in skill and knowledge gaps can be helpful. Says Tennessee district leader Scott Langford, “Our number one commitment is to accelerate. We are going to stay on high expectations on current grade level, and use intervention time and home time to address the needs. Everything I’ve read is that when you go back and try to over-remediate, all you do is grow larger deficits.”

[“5 Tips for Measuring and Responding to Covid-19 Learning Loss”](#) by Stephen Sawchuk in *Education Week*, June 12, 2020

Addressing “Covid Slide” in the Fall

In this *Education Week* article, Heather Hill (Harvard University) and Susanne Loeb (Brown University) explore how schools might deal with students’ predicted learning loss when schools reopen. Of course teachers deal with “summer slide” every year, reviewing what was supposed to have been learned the previous year and spiraling the curriculum to fill in forgotten or missed knowledge and skills. But learning gaps will be bigger after three months of remote learning, and will vary significantly depending on home advantages, how well schools managed online learning, and the degree of trauma experienced by students. Gaps may be especially problematic for the youngest students, who are usually on a steep learning curve with reading, writing, math, and social skills.

Hill and Loeb suggest the following steps when schools reopen, whatever configurations are used:

- Track down and reach out to students who disengaged from instruction while schools were closed, and make strenuous efforts to get them back into the fold.
- Have teachers at each level pass along to the next grade-level team what was not covered during remote learning.
- Have all teachers immediately check in on students’ emotional state and conduct quick, classroom-based assessments to get a handle on what students know and can do.
- Launch into grade-level content right from the start, rather than repeating material from the previous grade; missing knowledge and skills would then be assessed and backfilled in context.
- Provide effective tutoring for students who are struggling with new material – but don’t pull students out of core classes, which will make them fall further behind.
- Make the best use of instructional time throughout the year. This includes minimizing student and staff absences, cutting down interruptions to class time, keeping students working productively when they are not in school, and hiring effective substitutes.

[“How to Contend with Pandemic Learning Loss”](#) by Heather Hill and Susanne Loeb in *Education Week*, May 27, 2020; the authors are at heather_hill@gse.harvard.edu and loeb@brown.edu.

A Post-Pandemic Silver Lining for High-Schools?

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Michael Petrilli says the traditional 6-7-hour high-school day “has been crushing teenage souls for generations... Surveys have long shown that teenagers spend most of their day bored, zoned out, and only pretending to listen.” The daily grind of getting up way too early and trudging from one class to another is in stark contrast to many students’ lively engagement in after-school sports, band, theater, and jobs – and bears little resemblance to college, where there are only about 15 hours of in-person class time a week and lots of open time for independent work, group projects, office hours, and more.

“Students only learn when they are focused, engaged, and putting in effort,” says Petrilli. So why can’t high school look more like college? This is where the pandemic has opened our

eyes to different possibilities. Does every class need to meet every day? Could in-person instruction alternate with independent work or an internship? Could students choose a morning or afternoon schedule? Social distancing might make this mandatory in the fall, with schools at half capacity, but such an arrangement might be a welcome change long term. This, of course, would require changes in current seat-time requirements.

Half-time high, as Petrilli calls it, might not work for every student, and there is the danger of students learning half as much. He suggests two guardrails: (a) having students apply for the more-flexible arrangement and be selected based on their ability to handle independent work; and (b) holding all students accountable for learning through rigorous curriculum-based assessments, either school-generated or external, like Advanced Placement tests.

[“Half-Time High School May Be Just What Students Need”](#) by Michael Petrilli in *The Education Gadfly*, May 27, 2020; Petrilli can be reached at mpetrilli@fordhaminstitute.org.

Jennifer Gonzalez Looks Over the Horizon

“Probably the only thing that’s certain right now is that no one knows for sure what the next school year is going to look like,” says Jennifer Gonzalez in this *Cult of Pedagogy* article. She goes on to share ideas she’s gathered from numerous sources (including Larry Ferlazzo) on what might happen in the fall:

- *Ideas for reopening* - “Alrighty then. Deep breath,” she says. “Here are some ideas that look like they might sort of kind of work.”
 - Alternating days (or half days) – Schools would run an A/B schedule, with some students coming on A days and others on B days, with those not in school doing remote learning.
 - Cohorts – Small groups of students stay put all day, with teachers moving from classroom to classroom, which minimizes mixing.
 - Selective return of grade levels, students, or teachers – For example, kindergarten students return and educators with health risks work online.
 - Intensives – Students stay with the same teacher/class/course for a few weeks, then rotate to the next course, again minimizing mixing and movement in the building.
 - One-room schoolhouse – Students stay in the same room, with the same teacher, covering all subjects, perhaps with students doing cross-disciplinary project-based learning. This could work remotely or with split classes to maximize distancing.
 - Individual learning plans – This might come down to five or six plans for a classroom, with Plan 1 being full-time home instruction with paper-based curriculum, Plan 2 full-time home instruction with robust technology, Plan 3 coming to school some days, etc.
 - Keep distance learning – “Obviously, getting all students connected is a must,” says Gonzalez, “or at the very least finding good, workable ways to stay in touch without the Internet, but if that’s possible, it may be the most realistic approach at least for the start of the school year.”
- *Other considerations* – These are other ideas Gonzalez believes are worth considering, regardless of which approach is used.

- Acceleration versus remediation – Post-Katrina research in New Orleans schools showed that moving ahead with the curriculum, with backfilling and scaffolding, worked best.
- All-community outreach – Getting input from educators, parents, students, and others, then running draft proposals by them, is vital to success.
- Focusing on equity and culturally responsive teaching – The hardest-hit students will need particular attention.
- Looping – When teachers keep the same students into the 2020-21 school year, they can build on established relationships and have a better handle on what students know and can do.
- Substitutes - Availability of additional staff is important, but many subs are over 55, which might create health concerns if they're on site.
- Childcare for educators – “Many, many teachers are also parents,” says Gonzalez, “so if their own children can’t go back to school full-time, that poses a significant problem for teachers as well.”
- *Facing the unknown* – Rather than lapsing into “a state of paralysis, waiting for someone to tell you what the plan is,” Gonzalez has these thoughts:
 - Prepare for a full year of 100 percent distance learning. “Even if your school manages to get kids into the building,” she says, “social distancing will likely require students to get their materials and do much of their work on devices.” There’s lots of accumulated wisdom out there about how to do this effectively.
 - Create contingency plans. Be ready for different scenarios.
 - Give yourself space to grieve. “Although dwelling on this for long periods of time won’t be terribly useful,” she says, “it doesn’t help to pretend any of this is normal.”
 - Push back on unreasonable expectations. “Although high-quality instruction is obviously the goal,” says Gonzalez, “sending a message that denies current challenges can crush teachers’ spirits.”

“Good teaching is an intimate experience,” she concludes, “and most teachers are at their best when they can stand close to students, examine their work, give hugs and high-fives, have private conversations... Over the last ten years or so, as smartphones took over and we got more and more addicted to screens, we’ve all collectively shaken our heads at how disconnected we had become. But this pandemic has demonstrated that we weren’t actually disconnected. Yes, the devices made things different, but the whole time we were still finding ways to be close, to touch each other, to share physical space. It turns out we really do need that, and I think this is wonderful news.”

[“Reopening School: What It Might Look Like”](#) by Jennifer Gonzalez in *Cult of Pedagogy*, May 24, 2020

Ideas for Reopening Elementary Schools with Social Distancing

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Michael Petrilli suggests guidelines for opening elementary schools in the fall, drawing on advice from the CDC, schools in other countries that

have successfully reopened, and K-12 policymakers. Petrilli believes getting adults back to work is a major imperative, and having schools open will make that possible. With the strong likelihood of cuts in school budgets, any plan must be affordable. And no plan can give 100 percent guarantees because the virus will still be around until a vaccine is widely available. But Petrilli believes elementary schools can be reopened if we follow these steps:

- Give students and educators the choice of full-time remote learning for the coming school year. This is a moral and legal imperative for families with medical risks, and for those who want to quarantine pre-vaccine. Schools would need to make remote learning as attractive and effective as possible, which might mean outsourcing some functions to learning providers.

- Have K-3 students attend school Monday to Friday while grade 4 and 5 students come to school on alternating weekdays, thinning out the student population to make physical distancing easier. “While it’s hardly ideal,” says Petrilli, “fourth and fifth graders can do some independent work and can be left at home during the school day.” In schools where that doesn’t seem wise, he suggests using middle-school classrooms for grade 4-5 students and having grade 6-8 students spend more time learning independently at home.

- Run buses at 50 percent capacity or less. This might mean staggered bus schedules, more buses, or more students carpooling, walking, and biking to school.

- Require daily screening of adults and students, mask wearing, and frequent hand-washing in organized bathroom visits. And of course any student or adult showing signs of illness would be required to stay home.

- Keep all groups to 10-12 students and use every possible space around the school and every available adult (including volunteers) to supervise all the groups. This schoolwide social distancing means that students wouldn’t mix beyond their mini-homerooms at recess (which would be staggered throughout the day), students would eat in their classrooms, and there would be no assemblies, field trips, or other large-group events.

- Teachers move, students stay put. Homeroom teachers and specialists would rotate from room to room to reach all their students – two groups for homeroom teachers, more groups for art, music, media, physical education, and other specials.

- Have a clear plan if there’s an outbreak. If someone in the school community tests positive, the school would be closed for deep cleaning, contacts traced and tested, and if necessary, quarantined. It might be necessary for the school to be closed for two weeks to ensure there’s no super-spread to the community.

[“Seven Steps to Sending Elementary Kids Back to School and Parents Back to Work”](#) by Michael Petrilli in *The Education Gadfly*, May 15, 2020

When Schools Reopen, What to Do With Students Who Are Behind

In his *Education Gadfly* article, Michael Petrilli suggests that the question of how to catch students up when schools are back in session may depend on the grade level, the subject, and how far behind students are. He gives two examples:

- A high-school English class reading George Orwell’s novel, *1984* – Perhaps many students don’t have the vocabulary and interpretive skills to make meaning of the book, so one solution is for those students to read *The Giver* by Lois Lowry, closer to their reading level. But another approach, with no student missing out on *1984*, is for the teacher to do focused work to make the book understandable for less-prepared students. This might include watching a movie rendition or listening to the audiobook; and reviewing plot guides or digital editions of early chapters, with embedded vocabulary help and synopses. All this would be done just before the class reads *1984* together, preparing those students for success.

- A sixth-grade math class with most students arriving years behind – Should the teacher teach grade-level content and try to fill gaps wherever possible, or go back and address the unfinished learning from prior years and Covid-19 slide, running the risk of students not being up to grade level for the state test? The latter approach makes the most sense.

Petrilli believes the difference is that in math, there’s a clear progression of standards, with mastery of prerequisite skills very important to success. “No amount of ‘supports’ and ‘scaffolding’ is going to magically make that problem go away,” he says. “So we should encourage teachers to go back and help kids fill in the holes – while also helping students make progress on grade-level material.”

But English is different, he believes. In this area, as well as social studies and science, access to grade-level material should be the default. Once students can decode text, understanding and appreciating material is a matter of building up vocabulary and background knowledge, which effective teachers know how to do – “a mix of well-designed small-group instruction, one-on-one tutoring, online acceleration and enrichment, and whole-class discussions.”

The primary grades are different, says Petrilli. Students who were on the verge of sounding out letters, learning to read, and counting to one hundred have big challenges when schools reopen. Petrilli was heavily criticized online when he suggested keeping younger students back, but he’s worried about automatic promotion to the next grade. For starters, there must be thorough diagnosis using high-quality assessments. For students who are way behind, he believes they need “the gift of time,” which might be rebranded as “a second 2nd grade,” moving up to grade 2.5, ideally looping with the same teacher, spreading out three years of standards to four years.

“When It Comes to Catching Kids Up, Let’s Stop with the Generalities” by Michael Petrilli in *The Education Gadfly*, May 6, 2020 (Vol. 20, #8), <https://bit.ly/2YWuo4q>

Planning for Schools’ (Hopeful) Reopening

In this *Education Gadfly* article, Robert Pondiscio predicts that when the current crisis is over, remote learning won’t continue. We aren’t transforming ourselves “into a nation of homeschoolers or ‘unschoolers’,” he says, “any more than passengers thrown from a sinking ship into lifeboats can be said to have taken up rowing.” The online learning being implemented by hard-working teachers is an emergency response. As soon as it’s possible, kids and parents and

teachers will be happy to get back to their brick-and-mortar schools. Why? “The act of sending our kids every morning to a place called a school is a cultural habit formed over many generations,” says Pondiscio. “It persists because we value it, not for want of a better idea or a more-efficient delivery mechanism for education.”

There’s no question that this period of school closings will widen learning gaps, he continues, because families are much more unequal than schools: broadband access, devices and books in the home, parents available to help. In the words of Paul von Hippel (University of Texas/Austin), “We’re about to see what happens when we turn up the volume on families and turn it down on schools.” A recent NWEA report predicts that this fall, students will enter school with about 70 percent of the usual reading gains and less than 50 percent of expected achievement in math – and those are averages, masking big differences by social class.

The biggest priority for district leaders right now, says Pondiscio, is getting ready for reopening: “If we aren’t planning for the resumption of schools, and for the foreseeable conditions we will face, we will be caught flat-footed a second time.” His suggestions:

- Plan for different scenarios – fully open, staggered, virtual for a period of time.
- Assign qualified educators from the central office to teach in the opening weeks to improve the student/teacher ratio.
- Plan to accelerate the learning of students who enter the furthest behind.
- The district’s strongest teachers should be working with those students.
- Give special attention to the early grades.
- Assessment-driven achievement grouping may be necessary, especially in the lower grades.
- The primary focus for the early weeks should be on reinforcing the previous grade’s learning.
- Use teacher leaders and master teachers to design curriculum and control quality.
- Press new college graduates and non-professionals into service for several weeks or months of targeted, high-dosage tutoring in high-need schools.
- Don’t overcomplicate things for teachers.

“Keep it simple,” Pondiscio concludes. “Keep it focused, intense, achievable, and time-limited. The most attention should be on those who have fallen the furthest behind.”

“No, This Is Not the New Normal” by Robert Pondiscio in *The Education Gadfly*, April 14, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3cBSzsH>

Robert Slavin on an Ambitious Post-Pandemic Plan

In these back-to-back online articles, Robert Slavin (Johns Hopkins University) says that our current situation calls for something akin to the Marshall Plan, which committed billions of U.S. dollars to rebuild Western Europe after World War II. That war was awful, says Slavin, but schools and universities remained open. The coronavirus pandemic is different, profoundly interrupting the education of students at every level. “This is a particular problem, of course, for disadvantaged students,” says Slavin, “whose parents are more likely to get the virus, who are

less likely to have technology at home, and who are more often already having difficulties in school.”

Even for students who have robust Internet access, technology, and home support, “distance learning is not going to be enough,” he says. “There will be happy exceptions, but there is a reason that homeschooling is rare.” When schools reopen, there will be a massive challenge repairing the damage done and addressing a widening achievement gap. The work will be made more difficult because there’s likely to be an economic recession in the fall, with many young people entering the labor market at the worst possible time.

Slavin has a plan to address both problems: “Schools should hire, train, and deploy large numbers of recent (and not so recent) college graduates as tutors, and in other essential roles in schools,” he proposes. “Imagine that every school could receive up to five well-trained, well-supported teaching assistant tutors, with the number of tutors determined by each school’s needs.” These young men and women would focus on students who had fallen furthest behind, and could also work as health aides, helping students get eyeglasses and medications for asthma and other chronic illnesses that affect school success, as well as working with families on attendance, social-emotional development, and mental health.

Slavin cites research showing that one-on-one and small-group tutoring can have a powerful effect, up to 0.40 effect size (five months of schooling), provided tutors use proven methods, have expert professional development, and work with proven curriculum materials. He estimates the cost at \$600 per student – which compares favorably to the \$12,000 per capita cost of having students repeat the grade when schools reopen, something that’s been proposed as a post-Covid-19 intervention.

“A Marshall Plan for the Post-Covid-19 Recovery,” April 23, 2020, and “Marshall Plan II: Heal the Damage, but Build for the Future,” April 30, 2020, by Robert Slavin on Slavin’s website, <https://robertslavinsblog.wordpress.com/2020/04/>

School-Based Health Services When Schools Reopen

In this online article, Robert Slavin (Johns Hopkins University) has two observations on safely opening schools in the fall:

Children are rarely harmed by Covid-19, says Slavin, citing Maryland data showing only 2.2 percent of cases and no deaths among children age 0-9, and 4.25 percent of cases and one death among youth 10-19. Of much more concern are adults age 20-59, who account for 66.8 percent of Maryland cases and 243 deaths. The main health risks of opening schools affect staff, parents, and other adult relatives and friends. “What these observations mean,” says Slavin, “is that to be truly safe after reopening, each school should create and implement plans to keep their entire community safe and healthy.”

Because schools are such important community institutions, they should serve as a Covid-19 center for local health and referral. Slavin believes each school should have a full-time nurse (about 25 percent of U.S. schools don’t) and one or more well-trained health aides to work under the nurse’s direction. The job of the health aides would be to ensure that every child,

parent, family member, and educator is free of Covid-19, and, if they become ill, direct them to local health professionals for isolation and treatment. Aides would also provide up-to-date information to the community about social distancing, symptoms, and sources of care – and treatments and vaccines, when they become available. As the risks of Covid-19 diminish, health aides could focus on other health issues such as vision, prescriptions, and asthma.

[“Opening Healthy Schools”](#) by Robert Slavin on his website, June 11, 2020; Slavin can be reached at rslavin@jhu.edu.

The Kind of Tutoring We’ll Need in the Months Ahead

In this article in *Brookings*, Matthew Kraft (Brown University) and Michael Goldstein (Match Education) applaud several initiatives to recruit college students and recent graduates to tutor students who have fallen behind during the school closure crisis. Not only will such programs help address “Covid slide,” but they will act as an economic stimulus and fill in for the many internships and summer jobs that have been cancelled.

But Kraft and Goldstein caution that tutoring isn’t guaranteed to help. “The standard model of tutoring – a rotating cast of volunteers who sporadically show up to after-school or summer programs – doesn’t typically succeed,” they say. Billions of No Child Left Behind dollars were spent on this approach, and evaluations found little evidence of student learning gains.

Fortunately there’s solid, gold-standard research on “high-dosage tutoring,” which has the following characteristics:

- Tutors work full time with the same students through the school year, building relationships that pay off over time.
- Tutoring is personalized, with no more than a one-to-one or two-to-one ratio.
- All students in a school get tutoring, not just those with learning deficits. “Tutoring only struggling students attaches a stigma to the program,” say Kraft and Goldstein, “and is often perceived as a punishment.”
- Tutoring is a regular, daily, full-period class, not after school (which, again, feels punitive).
- Students get report card grades for tutoring, signaling its importance.
- Tutoring in math will have the biggest impact, since learning loss is likely most severe in this subject and tutors can address discrete skills and knowledge.

Kraft and Goldstein suggest forming a National Tutor Corps, along the lines of AmeriCorps, and focusing on (a) the absolute minimum of red tape, (b) careful recruiting and selection (it’s helpful to get feedback from students as candidates conduct 10-minute tutoring sessions), and (c) constant assessment and feedback as the program proceeds. There’s some evidence that high-dosage tutoring can be conducted remotely.

[“Getting Tutoring Right to Reduce Covid-19 Learning Loss”](#) by Matthew Kraft and Michael Goldstein in *Brookings*, May 21, 2020

Is This Looping's Moment?

In this article in *Education Drive*, Texas first-grade teacher Mark Rogers says that every year, the two months after spring break are precious – “an opportunity to crystallize an entire year’s worth of human connection, learning, and special classroom memories.” But not this year, with almost all students and teachers deprived of in-person connections. Rogers sees the transition from this year to 2020-21 as the perfect time for looping – teachers keeping their students for the next grade level. Here’s why he believes principals should support looping:

- Teachers bring into the next year all the human connections from this school year;
- With high-need students, teachers can carry forward the trust that was earned this year, again saving time and emotional energy;
- Teachers hit the ground running in the fall by saving the time normally spent learning names and family information and establishing classroom routines;
- Teachers know exactly what wasn’t covered in the previous year and will be able to more quickly fill in those gaps;
- Teachers are in a better position to decide what can be skipped as they merge the 2019-20 curriculum with 2020-21.

“This year, more than any other, our kids need continuity,” says Rogers, “our kids need their teachers to know them, and, as a result, our kids need their same teacher next year.”

“Why Students Need Looping Now More Than Ever” by Mark Rogers in *Education Drive*, April 17, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2RRR9Co>

Lessons from a Hong Kong School That’s Been Closed Since February

In this *Education Week* article, Mark Lieberman interviews Connie Kim, the middle-school principal of a K-12 school in Hong Kong that has a little more perspective on remote learning than U.S. schools: it’s been closed for in-person instruction for more than two months. Here are Kim’s thoughts from the long haul she and her colleagues have been through:

- *Forget about replicating the regular school day.* The school tried to run a regular seven-period schedule at first, but quickly found it was way too intense for a remote environment. The school day now consists of four hour-long periods, with the first 15-20 minutes of each reserved for live videoconferencing between teachers and students.
- *Build in no-screen time for students.* Kim’s school tries to avoid overdoing it each day, and has implemented a “wellness day” that’s a reprieve from the regular pace of teaching and learning. They’ve also blocked out time for reading, outdoor play, and doing things that don’t involve screens.
- *Don’t skimp on professional learning.* After having too little collaborative time at first, the school now has a regular schedule of staff sessions via Zoom so teachers can calibrate their teaching and share tips, insights, and resources.
- *Make it easier for students and parents.* At first, individual teachers in the middle school used different platforms for their learning plans, resulting in a chaotic environment for

kids and families to navigate. Teachers now use common procedures posted on Schoology, the school's learning management system.

- *Don't assume something can't be done until you've tried it.* Initially, Kim and her colleagues thought that offering personalized instruction and support would be impractical. But using breakout rooms, video chats, and teacher "office hours" solved the problem, and all this has been especially helpful for students with special needs.

- *Pace yourself.* After eight weeks of remote instruction, Kim says they're seeing a loss of enthusiasm and engagement among students. Teachers are now slowing down the pace of instruction and building in more checks for understanding and review. "The novelty of being on Zoom and working from home is wearing out now," she says. "It's a constant cycle of us having to regroup, recharge, having to be the cheerleaders for our students and our parents."

"6 Tips for Teaching Remotely Over the Long Haul of the Coronavirus" by Mark Lieberman in *Education Week*, April 10, 2020, <https://bit.ly/2Rz8qzQ>

Will There Be Lasting Changes from the Pandemic?

"Without preparation or permission, we're participating in the greatest social science experiment of all time," says Andy Markowitz in this article in *AARP Healthy Living*. He suggests some ways this public health and economic crisis may influence behavior over time:

- Working from home – Having experienced it, many are taking to the experience.
- Seeing your doctor – Telemedicine was rare before Covid-19, but is widespread now.
- Shopping for groceries – Online purchasing saves time and aggravation.
- Staying in touch – Zoom happy hours and Facebook Live watch parties will endure.
- Wearing face masks – What was common in Asia is now more accepted in the U.S.
- Movies at home – Streaming Netflix and other platforms have proven themselves.
- Traveling by air – The experience will be different in a number of ways.
- Riding public transportation – Same here.
- Protecting your privacy – People may become receptive to electronic contact tracing.
- Washing your hands – The message is getting through.

"10 Things the Pandemic Has Changed for Good" by Andy Markowitz in *AARP Healthy Living*, May 4, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3dB4cR3>

Covid-Era Practices That Should Continue After the Pandemic

In this article in *Education Week Teacher*, teacher/author Gina Denny says the school-closure crisis "has given us insights and tools to better serve our students." She lists six ways she plans to change "once there is a semblance of normal":

- *Use online technology routinely to deliver assignments, notes, and resources.* These months have brought millions of educators and students up to speed on Google Classroom and

other platforms. This will serve them well, even in standard-issue schooling, and also in college, where a fair amount of instruction is online.

- *Stop grading formative assignments.* Remote schooling has deemphasized grades, which has showcased the benefits of feedback for improvement versus summative judgment. “Fewer assignments with more detailed feedback can help students stay motivated,” says Denny, “understand the material more fully, and alleviate some of the pressure on teachers, even when giving individual feedback takes more time than right-wrong grading.”

- *Assign home-based performance tasks and projects.* Remote schooling has required students to upload choreographed dances, scripted scenes, and music performance for teachers’ critiques – great for avoiding snarky comments from peers and excellent preparation for college and real-world auditions.

- *Bring other professionals into the loop.* Many educators have become less shy about recruiting actors, musicians, authors, politicians, and activists to interact virtually with their students. No reason this shouldn’t continue.

- *Create a more-flexible schedule.* Teachers have often been surprised to see students who performed well in “regular” school floundering in stay-at-home schooling – and students who felt stifled by a bell schedule and micro-assignments flourishing with less structure. This suggests that a loose-tight approach might be better when regular school resumes, giving students more control over their time while holding them accountable for results and becoming more self-sufficient with time management.

- *Force students to use “old people” technology.* “Kids who plan to enter the workforce in the next decade,” says Denny, “need to know how to use Microsoft Office, properly thread e-mails, and use technology to manage their workflow.”

[“6 Classroom Changes Teachers Will Make When Schools Reopen”](#) by Gina Denny in *Education Week Teacher*, May 18, 2020

[Back to page one](#)

SPECIFIC SUGGESTIONS FOR ONLINE TEACHING

Doug Lemov on Combining Synchronous and Asynchronous Pedagogy

In one of his online “field notes,” author/educator Doug Lemov notes the advantages of two modes of learning that are top of mind these days:

- Synchronous – Builds connections with students, develops their habits of engagement and accountability, and allows the teacher to check for understanding in real time.
- Asynchronous – Allows students to work at their own pace on deeper assignments.

However, says Lemov, with synchronous classes, teachers are limited in the depth of learning they can assign, and too much Zoom work is exhausting. With asynchronous learning, it’s hard to know how students are doing and whether they need help.

Lemov describes how English teacher Eric Snider combined the two modalities and reaped the benefits of each (there's a video segment of the class at the link below):

- Snider kicked off the lesson with an engaging 20-minute synchronous lesson on the novel the class was reading, playing an audiobook of a passage.
- He then set up students for independent work with a cue (“Get ready for a plot twist...”) and a provocative question.
- He kept the Zoom connection live and students remained on the line as they worked (some turned off their cameras).
- The directions remained on the screen for students to review.
- Snider monitored students' work, giving brief compliments, letting them know he was available to help (“I'm here if you need me”), and inviting them to send him a chat if they needed more time.
- Then he brought the class back together to discuss how they did and review answers.

[“\(A\)Synchrony in Action: Eric Snider’s Hybrid Lesson”](#) by Doug Lemov in *Teach Like a Champion*, May 31, 2020

Talking to Young People About Covid-19 – This [tip sheet](#) from the Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress in Maryland has suggested scripts for explaining the pandemic to preschoolers, school-age children, and teens: what it is, how we protect ourselves, and how we protect people who are at risk.

Spotted in [“How to Talk to Students About the Coronavirus Without Scaring Them”](#) by Angela Duckworth in *Education Week*, May 27, 2020

A Detailed Guide for Online Learning – This 11-page guide has practical advice and numerous links for engaging students online and building lasting learning through taking in new content, strengthening long-term memory, and retrieving what's been learned.

[“A Science of Learning Guide to Educational Technology”](#) by Kristin Webster, Ryan Marklewitz, Sam Leitermann-Long, Eva Shultis, Andrew Seidman, and Ian Kelleher at the Center for Transformative Teaching and Learning at St. Andrew's Episcopal School, Maryland, April 2020; Kelleher and colleagues are open to feedback at ikelleher@saes.org.

Comprehensive Online Mental Health Resources – This website, created by Sam Dylan Finch, covers a wide range of issues: emotional, physical, situational, relational, and more.

[“Your Covid-19 ‘Choose-Your-Own-Adventure’ Mental Health Guide”](#) by Sam Dylan Finch in *HealthLine*, April 24, 2020

An Online Activity to Help Students Understand Place Value – [This website](#), created by Daniel Scher, helps students visualize numbers and place value on a number line. Students guess the location of a red dot on the line and then zoom out to get a more precise sense. There are multiple problems.

Spotted in “Place Value Activities for Third and Fourth Grade” in *Mathematics Teacher: Learning & Teaching PK-12*, May 2020 (Vol. 113, #5, p. 423)

UbD Units on Covid-19 – Newsela has just published two Understanding by Design curriculum unit plans on the pandemic developed by Jay McTighe and colleagues. Available (with a free account) at: [Understanding the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) and

[Covid-19: Human Disease and Epidemics, A Study of Interacting Systems](#)

You can learn more about the units in this recorded webinar by Jay McTighe:

<https://go.newsela.com/Jay-McTighe-ODC.html>

Jennifer Gonzalez Resources – This link provides access to an amazing array of materials and suggestions for online learning: <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/distance-learning/>:

- Start with your head and your heart
- Nuts and bolts of online learning: Connecting and communicating with students, keeping everything organized, lesson design, content delivery, and options for demonstrating learning
- General tips and advice for teachers
- Troubleshooting, including helping students who don't yet have Internet access

“Distance Learning: A Gently Curated Collection of Resources for Teachers” by Jennifer Gonzalez in *Cult of Pedagogy*, March 30, 2020

Surveys on distance learning and well-being – Panorama Education is making several surveys available free at <https://www.panoramaed.com/distance-learning-surveys>. Panorama is also offering a free principal's toolkit, with a variety of resources for leading while schools are closed <https://www.panoramaed.com/principal-toolkit-spring-2020>.

Khan Academy Breakthrough Junior Challenge – This competition, launched on April 1, deadline June 25, 2020, challenges young people 13-18 to explain a big idea in physics, life sciences, mathematics, or the science of the COVID-19 pandemic in a 3-minute video. Competition and \$\$\$ prize details are at <https://breakthroughjuniorchallenge.org>.

Updated Media Bias Chart – The Ad Fontes chart analyzes numerous media sources by reliability and political leaning: <https://www.adfontesmedia.com/?v=402f03a963ba>; more important now than ever for students.

A Virtual Kid Lit Party – With children's literature festivals and gatherings cancelled this spring and summer, several authors went to social media and very quickly put together the

Everywhere Book Fest <https://everywherebookfest.com>, scheduled to open its virtual doors on May 1 and 2, 2020.

“Virtual Kid Lit Party” by K.Y. in *School Library Journal*, April 2020 (Vol. 66, #4, p. 19)

A Free Community-Needs Survey – Panorama Education is offering these survey questions on students’ needs, as well as free tabulation of results:

<https://www.panoramaed.com/community-needs-survey>

Tips (with Graphics) for Online Learning – Paviter Singh has curated 18 brief tips for working with students remotely, each accompanied by a graphic symbol:

<https://www.dropbox.com/s/rsm7bmqcaxxbtjt/ePedagogy%20Visuals.pdf?dl=0>

Five Suggestions for SEL in Distance Learning – Janice Toben of the Institute for Social and Emotional Learning shares tips for distance learning under these headings: Rituals, Energize, Appreciation, Lighten, and Mindful: <https://www.instituteforsel.net/posts/realms>

“A New REALM: IFSEL’s Tips for Distance Learning” by Janice Toben, March 16, 2020

One State’s Resources – The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has compiled extensive resources for teachers and parents:

<http://www.doe.mass.edu/covid19/ed-resources.html>

Resources for Homebound Preschoolers – Victoria McDougald compiled this list of 32 activities for the youngest students: <https://bit.ly/2QFuMPY>

“Smiling Through: Thirty-Two Resources for Entertaining Energetic Preschoolers During Daycare and Preschool Closures” by Victoria McDougald in *Education Gadfly*, March 19, 2020

Advice from a New York City Charter School Leader – Robert Pondiscio interviews Success Academy founder and leader Eva Moskowitz on her schools’ policies during the crisis:

<https://bit.ly/2vIujFr>

“Remote Learning Advice from Eva Moskowitz: ‘Keep It Simple’” by Robert Pondiscio in *Education Gadfly*, March 18, 2020

PreK-12 Learning Resources – PBS/WGBH in Massachusetts offers math, ELA, social studies, and science resources for grades PreK-12: <https://bit.ly/2UeooBf>

Learning-at-Home Activities – Scholastic offers these resources for PreK-12:

<https://classroommagazines.scholastic.com/support/learnathome.html>

Teaching with Zines – This website has numerous suggestions for getting students creating “zines” – short magazine articles published as booklets:

<https://zinelibraries.info/running-a-zine-library/teaching-with-zines/>

Spotted in “Zines in the Classroom: Finding an Audience of One – or 100” by Trisha Collopy in *Council Chronicle*, March 2020 (Vol. 29, #3, pp. 26-29)

Phi Delta Kappan Survey, Resources – This link <https://bit.ly/3auw9J9> has the results of a PDK survey and other resources for the coronavirus crisis.

[Back to page one](#)

VIDEOS, GRAPHICS, AND LESSONS

Literature podcasts – Memphis teacher Christy Shriver works with [How to Love Lit Learning](#), a nonprofit that produces free podcasts to supplement classroom studies of great literature. This month’s edition is the final episode of a discussion of *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley. Other studies are available on the website: *The Scarlet Letter*, *Lord of the Flies*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Raisin in the Sun*, and *Animal Farm*. There are also studies of poets and writers, including Paulo Neruda, Frederick Douglass, and Elizabeth Cady Stanton. Shriver can be reached at christy@howtolovelitpodcast.com.

Two Student-Created Musical Performances – These online performances might put a smile on your face. The first is by students in EL Education schools:

- *Make the World Better* by EL Education students – <https://vimeo.com/413100268>
- *All Day Long (The Coronavirus Song)* by Chloe Langford – <https://youtu.be/SJM-u6IABGQ>

Video Showing How a Virus Can Spread in a Classroom – This video makes virus spread visible: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5-dl74zxPg&feature=youtu.be>

“How to See Germs Spread” by Mark Rober, March 18, 2020, spotted in *The Educator’s Notebook*, March 29, 2020

The Best Graphic on Virus Transmission – This *New York Times* graphic by Jonathan Corum <https://nyti.ms/33Epzgo> does an excellent job showing how one fewer human-to-human contact drastically reduces the exponential spread of the coronavirus.

“You Can Help Break the Chain of Transmission” by Siobhan Roberts in *The New York Times*, March 19, 2020

Animated Graphics on a Virus’s Exponential Spread – This *Washington Post* article by Harry Stevens <https://wapo.st/3dZbdfj> has several animated graphics that show how a virus spreads exponentially.

“Why Outbreaks Like Coronavirus Spread Exponentially, and How to ‘Flatten the Curve’” by Harry Stevens in *The Washington Post*, March 14, 2020

Free Daily Online Drawing/Cartooning Lessons – This *School Library Journal* article lets us know that author Jarrett (JJ) Krosoczka, creator of *Hey, Kiddo* and other popular titles, is doing a YouTube drawing/cartooning lesson every weekday at 2:00 p.m. Eastern Time at <https://www.youtube.com/studiojjk>. All previous lessons are available here: <http://www.studiojjk.com/draweveryday.html>

“Authors and Illustrators Lend a Hand” by K.Y. in *School Library Journal*, April 2020 (Vol. 66, #4, p. 18)

YouTube Channels for the Secondary Level – Emma Finn compiled these high-quality video links for middle and high-school students: <https://bit.ly/3djZhVr>

“Great YouTube Channels for Middle Schoolers and High Schoolers for Learning from Home During COVID-19 Closures” by Emma Finn in *Education Gadfly*, March 19, 2020

Great Minds Videos – These “Knowledge on the Go” materials and daily videos cover math, ELA, and science topics for grades K-8, as well as some high-school topics: <https://gm.greatminds.org/en-us/knowledgeonthego>

Online News Created by Elementary Students – The Little News Ears website for students age 4 to 9 covers the news with a light touch: <https://littlenewsears.com>. The site, whose content is free during the Covid-19 pandemic, was created at Tessa International School. Dan Buck is the head of school.

Tips for Making a Screencast – In this *Cult of Pedagogy* feature, Jennifer Gonzalez interviews Kareem Farah on the art of making a classroom video. One key takeaway: teachers’ videos shouldn’t be longer than six minutes!

“Everything You Need to Know About Building a Great Screencast Video” by Kareem Farah in *Cult of Pedagogy*, April 26, 2020, <https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/screencast-videos/>, interviewed by Jennifer Gonzalez

[Back to page one](#)

FREE CHILDREN’S BOOKS

Young Adult Novels – This [feature](#) in *School Library Journal* has brief descriptions of 13 young adult romance novels, with grade-level recommendations.

“Meet-Cutes Come in All Colors: 13 Irresistible YA Romances” by Desiree Thomas in *School Library Journal*, May 11, 2020

[Back to page one](#)

What Students Are Reading – This *School Library Journal* [feature](#) lists what students at different grade levels are reading during the school-closure crisis; many of the books have direct links.

“What Are Kids Reading Now? Follett Reveals the Top E-book and Audiobook Checkouts” by Kathy Ishizuka in *School Library Journal*, April 29, 2020

An Online Book on the Pandemic – This book by Elizabeth Jenner, Kate Wilson, and Nia Roberts, illustrated by Axel Scheffler, explains the virus to children from preschool to grade six: https://nosycrow.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Coronavirus_INSwith-cover.pdf.

Coronavirus: A Book for Children (Nosy Crow, 2020), spotted in *School Library Journal*, May 2020 (Vol. 66, #5, p. 12)

Free Audiobooks Online – This *School Library Journal* article notes several sources of material geared to the virus crisis, notably (you can find more in the full issue, next item): Audible’s free site for families and children: <https://stories.audible.com/discovery>

“Going the Distance: Librarians, Covid-19, and the Online Learning Challenge” by *School Library Journal* Editors, illustration by James Yang, in *School Library Journal*, May 2020 (Vol. 66, #5, pp. 20-21)

School Library Journal Free Online – This highly informative magazine for school librarians and literacy mavens has just made its current content free: <https://msi.ipublishcentral.com/pdfreader/school-library-journal-may-2020>
Be sure to check out “Comic Relief: Free Resources on Covid-19 in Graphic Form” on pages 34-35, and “Great Books: Asian Pacific American Showcase” on pages 39-41.

Nancy Flanagan Knapp (University of Georgia/ Athens) suggests five areas in which teachers and school librarians can make effective use of technology, with free links in each:

- Making basic literacy skills practice effective and fun:
 - PBS Kids Reading Games: pbskids.org/games/reading
 - Education World, The Reading Machine: www.educationworld.com/a_tech/archives/readingmachine.shtml
 - Scholastic Student Activities website: teacher.scholastic.com/activities/clf/tguidesitemap.htm
 - The Learning Company games: classicreload.com
- Increasing the number and variety of texts available for readers at all levels:
 - The International Children’s Digital Library: en.childrenslibrary.org
 - Unite for Literacy: uniteforliteracy.com
 - Storyjumper: www.storyjumper.com/book/search

- Project Gutenberg: www.gutenberg.org
- Gismo Freeware: www.techsupportalert.com/free-ebooks-audio-books-read-online-download.htm
- Amazon and Barnes and Noble: search Free Kindle books at www.amazon.com or Free Ebooks at www.barnesandnoble.com.
- Scaffolding texts for struggling readers and writers of all ages:
 - Tech for Teachers: Supporting Struggling Readers with Speech-to-Text: youtu.be/zBLXkAVyJWU
- Personalizing and differentiating instruction for diverse readers:
 - Newsela: current non-fiction articles at multiple Lexile levels: newsela.com
 - Simple English Wikipedia: simple.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page
 - Storyline Online: read-aloud, mostly for younger children: www.storylineonline.net
 - Fact Monster: fun facts, trivia games, and homework help for elementary students: factmonster.com
 - Khan Academy: short online tutorials for all ages: khanacademy.org
- Bringing out the social in reading:
 - Goodreads for students 13 and up; librarians can create private groups with restricted membership: www.goodreads.com
 - Biblionasium, which allows users to share their reading preferences; for students age 6-13: www.biblionasium.com
 - Library Thing: lets students create a private but shareable personal bookshelf, for kids 13 and up: librarything.com
 - Poetry-Free-for-All: for poets of all ages: www.everypoet.org
 - Teen Ink: www.teenink.com
 - Book Crossing: a forum for sharing actual print books in a unique way: www.bookcrossing.com
 - Epals: A reputable global pen pal site that can encourage reading and writing: www.epals.com/#!/connections

“Using Technology to Foster Real Reading in the School Library and Beyond” by Nancy Flanagan Knapp in *Knowledge Quest*, September/October 2019 (Vol. 48, #1, pp. 54-60); Knapp can be reached at nfknapp@uga.edu, summarized in Marshall Memo 802

Free webcomics – This *School Library Journal* feature by Mahnaz Dar provides links to 19 webcomics for middle-grade and young adult audiences: <https://bit.ly/3bKeOfR>

“19 Webcomics to Keep Kids and Teens Engaged” by Mahnaz Dar in *School Library Journal*, April 6, 2020

Permission from Publishers to Read Books Online – This link from *School Library Journal* <https://bit.ly/2JrvKLO> includes a constantly updated list of publishers who have granted

special permission for teachers to read their books aloud online while schools are closed. The current list includes Abrams, Candlewick, Children’s Books, Chronicle Kids, Crabtree Publishing, Disney Publishing, HarperCollins, Holiday House, Houghton Mifflin/Harcourt, Lee and Low, Lerner, Little Brown Young Readers, Peachtree, Penguin, Random House, Scholastic, and Simon & Schuster.

“Publishers Adapt Policies to Help Educators” in *School Library Journal*, March 18, 2020

- “10 Strategies for Leading Online When School Is Closed” by Reshan Richards and Stephen Valentine on Global Online Academy, March 4, 2020 - <https://bit.ly/3a7yuK1>
- “Five Tips for Designing Excellent Video Calls” by Emily Hamlin on Global Online Academy, March 13, 2020 - <https://bit.ly/2Wir8iz>
- “Coronavirus Has Led to a Rush of Online Teaching. Here’s Some Advice for Newly Remote Instructors” by Jeffrey Young on *EdSurge*, March 11, 2020 - <https://bit.ly/2WjrVQ8>
- “Best Practices: Online Pedagogy” from Harvard University, <https://teachremotely.harvard.edu/best-practices>
- Resources compiled by Jennifer Gonzalez - <https://bit.ly/3d3x8lh>

In addition, children’s books are available free at Bookshare: www.bookshare.org/cms/

[Back to page one](#)

ONLINE TEACHING TECH RESOURCES AND TROUBLESHOOTING

Online Writing Ideas – The [826 website](#) has free resources focused on getting students to write well.

“A Good Time to Write” from 826 National

Online Writing Prompts – The 826LA [website](#) has numerous suggestions to get students writing, organized by grades 1-5 and 6-12.

“826LA” May 2020

UbD Units on Covid-19 – Newsela has just published two Understanding by Design curriculum unit plans on the pandemic developed by Jay McTighe and colleagues. Available (with a free account) at: [Understanding the Covid-19 Pandemic](#) and

[Covid-19: Human Disease and Epidemics, A Study of Interacting Systems](#)

You can learn more about the units in this recorded webinar by Jay McTighe:

<https://go.newsela.com/Jay-McTighe-ODC.html>

Zoom Breakout Rooms – Here are instructions on how you can randomly assign a group of up to 150 students to breakout rooms of 3 (or more):

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/206476093-Getting-Started-with-Breakout-Rooms>

Zoom Polling – Another powerful feature of Zoom is the ability to conduct a live poll of participants. Here are the instructions:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/213756303-Polling-for-Meetings>

Dealing with Zoom Problems – These articles in *The New York Times* and *Education Week* report on malicious harassment of Zoom meetings and classes in recent weeks. Some of the “zoombombing” interruptions are by organized groups using a variety of platforms (including Discord, an app popular in right-wing circles) to plan attacks, while others are by teenagers who say they are stressed out by the schoolwork their teachers are assigning (classroom management problems that have migrated to the online world). Zoom, which had 76 million first-time installs in March, has scrambled to provide safeguards and advice to users and respond to concerns about data privacy.

Here are Massachusetts teacher Megan Mullaly’s suggestions for K-12 educators. They’ve been widely shared on Twitter (spotted in the *Education Week* article linked below):

- Do not post your link publicly.
- Consider using a password for entry to your classes.
- Use the Waiting Room feature to screen new arrivals.
- If possible, have another teacher co-host to manage waiting room, comments, muting.
- Turn off Private Chat (this eliminates chats among students but leaves on group chats).
- Turn off Screen Sharing (it can be added back once norms are established).
- Turn on the “remove uninvited participant” and/or “put participant on hold.”
- Lock your meeting once everyone is present.
- Explore other settings, including Chime Upon Entry, Muting All, Annotations, etc.
- Use Zoom for check-ins, games, and social interaction but not for direct teaching.
- Have some practice Zooms with friends and co-workers to check out the features.

“As Zoom’s Use Soars, So Does Its Abuse by Harassers” by Taylor Lorenz and Davey Alba in *The New York Times*, April 4, 2020, <https://nyti.ms/2Xg6i3M> and “Zoom Use Skyrockets During Coronavirus Pandemic, Prompting Wave of Problems for Schools” by Mark Lieberman in *Education Week*, April 3, 2020, <https://bit.ly/3bWkqmQ>

[Back to page one](#)

KIM MARSHALL’S TEACHING MATERIALS
(available free at the links below)

Guns, Germs, and Steel Summary: Written in consultation with author Jared Diamond, this 14-page summary (with maps and illustrations) of the Pulitzer Prize-winning history of the origins of worldwide wealth inequality is suitable for high-school students in world/global studies courses bit.ly/2IYJq0y

The Story of Life, from the Big Bang to You: Written for middle- and high-school students (with illustrations by Ingrid Johnson), this is a comprehensive history of the origins of the solar system, the Earth, and life on Earth (originally published by Holt, Rinehart, & Winston, the updated 2019 edition is open source) bit.ly/38ZI6ov

Reading Stories, Book 1: 92 high-interest stories with comprehension questions originally published by Educators Publishing Service, now open source marshallmemo.com/articles/Reading%201.pdf

Reading Stories, Book 2: 94 high-interest stories with comprehension questions, originally published by Educators Publishing Service, now open source marshallmemo.com/articles/Reading%202.pdf

English: 36 Cumulative Units in Grammar, Writing Skills, and Word Analysis, Book A, originally published by Educators Publishing Service, now open source marshallmemo.com/articles/English%20Book%20A.pdf

English: 36 Cumulative Units in Grammar, Writing Skills, and Word Analysis, Book B, originally published by Educators Publishing Service, now open source marshallmemo.com/articles/English%20Book%20B.pdf

Math: 35 Cumulative Units in Concepts and Skills, Book A, originally published by Educators Publishing Service, now open source marshallmemo.com/articles/Math%20Book%20A.pdf

Math: 35 Cumulative Units in Concepts and Skills, Book B, originally published by Educators Publishing Service, now open source marshallmemo.com/articles/Math%20Book%20B.pdf

(Teacher guides to the English and Math workbooks are available at www.marshallmemo.com, click Kim Published Writing and scroll down to Curriculum Materials.)

[Back to page one](#)