

**November 2021**

**NASET  
Special  
Educator  
e-Journal**

*Exceptional Teachers Teaching Exceptional Children*

## **Table of Contents**

- [Special Education Legal Alert. By Perry A. Zirkel](#)
- [Buzz from the Hub](#)
- [Communication Challenges Elementary School Teachers Experience Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Consequences to Those Impacted Areas. By Matthew Miller](#)
- [5 Steps to Working with Your School Board](#)
- [Family Engagement and Children with Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Educators and Parents](#)
- Book Reviews
  - [The New One Minute Manager. By Jessica Garcia](#)
  - [Impactful Instructional Leadership & Framework for Success. By Natalia M. Hayter](#)
  - [The Making of a Manager: What to do When Everyone Looks at you. By Austyn Johnson](#)
- [Acknowledgements](#)

## **Special Education Legal Alert**

**Perry A. Zirkel**

**© October 2021**

This month's update identifies recent, appeals court decisions illustrating the remedial consequences of child find violations under the IDEA and the liability consequences of bullying claims under Section 504. For automatic e-mailing of future legal alerts, sign up at [perryzirkel.com](http://perryzirkel.com); this website also provides free downloads of various related articles and special supplements.

**In its September 10, 2021 officially published decision in *J.N. v. Jefferson County Board of Education*, the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals addressed the IDEA issue of whether a child find violation results in a compensatory remedy and attorneys' fees. The student in this case received a diagnosis of ADHD at an early age. In approximately grade 5 or 6, the parent discontinued the student's ADHD medication. The student's report card in grade 6 consisted mostly of As and Bs, with a C in math. However, in grades 7 and 8 (a) her academic performance dropped significantly, especially in math; (b) her problematic behaviors escalated notably; and (c) her mother asked about special education. Meanwhile, the math teacher gave the student extra help in class. In early October of grade 8 the school activated its problem-solving team. Two months later, the school initiated a referral for an eligibility evaluation. A week later, the parent filed for a due process hearing, seeking compensatory education. In mid-March, after completing the evaluation, the team determined that the student was eligible for an IEP under the IDEA. The hearing officer ultimately ruled that the district violated child find by not evaluating the student more promptly after having reasonably clear suspicion of eligibility but, based on the parent's failure to provide requisite proof, declined to award any compensatory education. Both sides appealed. The federal district court affirmed**

<p><b>the hearing officer’s decision and rejected the parent’s request for attorneys’ fees. The parent appealed to the Eleventh Circuit.</b></p>	
<p>Did the Eleventh Circuit agree with the school district’s argument that it did not violate child find?</p>	<p>The court concluded that it was not necessary to address this argument in light of its ruling about the remedy.</p>
<p>Did the Eleventh Circuit agree with the parent’s claim that she was entitled to compensatory education to remedy the child find violation for her eligible child?</p>	<p>No, for this substantive remedy the court ruled that the parent failed to meet her burden to prove substantive harm resulting from this procedural violation.</p>
<p>More specifically, what was the requisite substantive harm that the parent fail to prove?</p>	<p>“[T]he services that the school provided were worse than what [the child] would have received .... from a more timely IEP.”</p>
<p>Did the Eleventh Circuit affirm the denial of prevailing party status that would qualify the parent for attorney’s fees?</p>	<p>Yes, because the district set in motion the evaluation leading to the IEP before she filed for a hearing, and she did not receive the remedy.</p>
<p>Although raising questions about the consequences of child find violations, especially for a child determined eligible under the IDEA, and the difference between general education interventions and special education, the otherwise high potential precedential weight of this decision is limited by not only the three-state (AL, GA, and FL) boundary of the Eleventh Circuit but also the court’s repeated reliance on the broad discretionary latitude for (a) hearing officers for remedies and (b) lower court decisions upon appellate review.</p>	

**In its unpublished decision in *Csutoras v. Paradise High School* on September 7, 2021, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals addressed the issue of school district liability for alleged bullying of a student with disabilities. The student in this case was a ninth grader with a 504 plan for ADHD. The agreed-upon accommodations were limited to extra time when needed to complete work and assisted review of his notes to help keep him organized. At a high school football game, when he was talking with a female classmate, a male student suddenly approached and punched him in the face several times, causing serious injury. The reason for the assault was jealousy, which was not connected at all with his ADHD. The school’s investigation revealed that the other student had hit him on the shoulder during the lunch period a few days earlier but that school personnel had no knowledge of it or any other harassment or bullying prior to the punching incident. His parents filed suit for money damages in federal court, citing Office for Civil Rights (OCR) guidance that interpreted Section 504 as requiring districts to engage in anti-bullying actions based on what amounts to a negligence standard starting with reason to know (i.e., constructive knowledge) of harassment of students with disabilities. The district court granted the defendant’s pretrial motion for summary judgment, and the parents appealed to the Ninth Circuit.**

First, the parents argued that the court should adopt the four-factor test set forth in OCR’s 2014 Dear Colleague Letter for peer harassment under Section 504: 1-disability- based; 2-sufficient for hostile environment; 3-constructive or actual knowledge; and 4-lack of appropriate response.

Affirming the lower court, the Ninth Circuit roundly rejected the proposed adoption because (1) the Letter makes clear that it does not apply to suits for liability, and (2) the Letter lacks any force as the authoritative or official position of the U.S. Department of Education via its OCR.

Alternatively, the parents argued that the four successive OCR letters, starting in 2000, put districts on notice that students with disabilities

“[S]uch an expansive interpretation is foreclosed by the law governing private suits for damages, which requires that

need social accommodations, even if never requested, to prevent bullying and other harassment.	plaintiffs meet the high bar of deliberate indifference—i.e., where ‘the school’s response to the harassment or lack thereof was clearly unreasonable in light of the known circumstances.’”
If these Dear Colleague Letters are not applicable, what are the standards that are the essential elements in Section 504 suits for money damages arising from peer harassment?	Starting with the Supreme Court’s <i>Davis v. Monroe Cnty. Bd. of Educ.</i> (1999) decision, the key standards are disability-based, actual knowledge, and deliberate indifference—all missing in this case.
<p>Although reminding interested individuals that U.S. Department of Education guidance is sometimes distinctly different from case law, the Ninth Circuit noted that “we need not decide whether all Dear Colleague Letters, or similar documents, are or are not eligible for deference or can or cannot create legal obligations.” This issue poses particular significance in relation to the various Departmental guidance documents that continue to come forth as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Remember too that the channels of administrative enforcement, such as the IDEA state complaint procedures and OCR’s corresponding complaint investigation process, may not answer this issue the same as hearing officers or courts.</p>	

## Buzz from the Hub

All articles below can be accessed through the following links:

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-oct2021-issue1/>

<https://www.parentcenterhub.org/buzz-sept2021-issue2/>

### **Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Students at Risk of Self-Harm**

From the U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights (OCR) and the U.S. Department of Justice, this joint 3-page fact sheet can help support students with mental health disabilities, their families, and their schools in the era of COVID-19. OCR also released a **letter to educators** highlighting the civil rights obligations of schools and postsecondary institutions to students with mental health disabilities.

### **Connect to Care**

From the Child Mind Institute come several on-point mental health resources for families and professionals alike.

- - Its new **Family Resource Center**, which features over 700 resources on kids’ mental health, learning disorders, and common parenting challenges — all in English and Spanish.
  - Its **latest newsletter**, which connects you with stand-alone articles in English and Spanish, such as “*Should I get care for my child?*” and “*How to find a children’s mental health professional.*”
  - The **2021 Children’s Mental Health Report** (also available in **Spanish**), which focuses on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on children’s mental health.

### **For Parents of Children Who Were Just Diagnosed With a Health Condition**

Having your child diagnosed with a health condition can be downright frightening. Here are 5 gentle reminders for anyone whose child was just diagnosed with a disability or chronic illness.

### **New to Disability?**

This, too, is an article meant for parents who've just found out that their child has a disability.

### **Autism | Have you seen what Sesame Street offers?**

(Available in [Spanish](#)) (Storybook "*We're Amazing, 1, 2, 3!*") is now available in Mandarin and Cantonese) Front-liners and families, you're in for a treat. Sesame Street offers Julia, a girl with autism spectrum disorder, and a website of stellar info including videos for kids, interactives for kids, parent videos, scads of info about autism itself, and a newsletter that will flow yet more info your way.

### **Return to School Roadmap: Development and Implementation of IEPs in the Least Restrictive Environment**

The title's a mouthful, but the content is right on time for the school year. This Q&A from OSERS at the U.S. Department of Education tackles topics covering such a wide range of key IEP elements that you have to see it for yourself!

### **Video on Supported Decision Making**

*Thanks to Lauren Agoratus for posting this resource in [CentersConnect](#). Looks like a goodie.*

About the video: Jordan was just hours away from a court hearing that would have awarded his parents guardianship. In the video Jordan shares his supported decision-making story and how he almost lost his rights. Jordan and Ashley also talk about a new project they are working on for the [Center of Youth Voice](#) to train other self-advocates about alternatives to guardianship.

### **2 New Toolkits for Child Welfare and Juvenile Justice Agencies**

Child Trends has published 2 new toolkits that are designed to help [child welfare agencies](#) and [juvenile justice agencies](#) support children and youth during and in the aftermath of natural disasters and pandemics, using a trauma-informed, resilience-focused foundation for natural



disaster response. (*Spanish versions of the toolkits:* for Child Welfare agencies; for Juvenile Justice agencies)

## **Brain Injury in Children**

Looking for info to share with families on brain injury in children? Here are two to pursue:

—**Infographic poster** from the CDC

—**Articles and guidance to share with families and educators** from Brainline

## **What is a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP)?**

(Also available in Spanish: ¿**Qué es un plan de intervención del comportamiento?**) | A BIP is a plan to help children whose problem behavior in school is affecting their learning. This article from Child Mind answers 3 basic questions: What is a BIP? How is a BIP created? How can parents tell if the plan is working?

Want to know even more? Check out CPIR's **Resource Collection on Functional Behavioral Assessment and BIPs**! It includes videos, helpful websites, and lots of info in English and Spanish.

## **Communication Challenges Elementary School Teachers Experience Due to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and the Consequences to Those Impacted Areas**

**Matthew Miller**

### **Abstract**

The COVID-19 virus has had an impact on elementary school education in almost every way. Yet, as it is a relatively new issue in the field of research, there are few peer-reviewed studies that examine this specifically to the world of elementary education. The purpose of this study is to examine several aspects of an elementary teacher's teaching environment narrowed to two specific categories – Learning and Relationships. The study will investigate the impact of remote learning as the means to communicate, to teach, to assess and manage a remote classroom as well as how relationships that were built so much more quickly, naturally and were relied upon, had now become challenged and in many ways compromised.

### **Introduction**

Within the first week of this researcher's student teaching stint this past September, it was very apparent how challenging it would be to manage an elementary school classroom of students remotely. By then, an appreciation of how complicated teaching *successfully* to elementary school students is, was old news. The Spring of 2020 was full of commentary of the teaching challenges and gymnastics teachers and administrators had to jump through to get through that school year. Yet, the complicatedness of actually teaching in this new dynamic did not hit home till this researcher was front and center. There, seated in front of a laptop screen of a literacy lesson with five of fifteen students visible in a stacked sidebar of the screen, and four students spread out actually in class and a protective mask fogging this researcher's glasses, those challenges (not the glasses) became much clearer. The notion of effectively communicating to these students, looking from onscreen lesson to students onscreen, and to those in the classroom;

all presented as challenges. Add to that dynamic, the on-going logistical issues of classroom management, accurate assessments and even Professional Development, all have come to the forefront of elementary school communication issues. It is this experience that prompted the focus of this research's two questions:

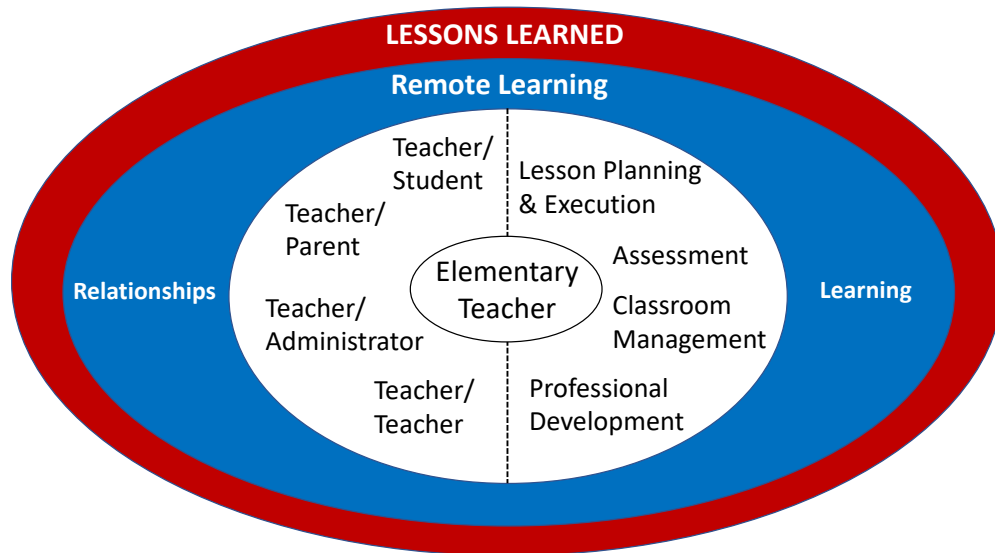
***How has an elementary teacher's communication needs become compromised due to the pandemic? What are the consequences to those areas impacted and what are the lessons learned?***

Communication as a way of exchanging information or news was easily taken for granted in every day life and, no doubt, was the case within elementary school teaching. Speaking directly to students; exchanging ideas, teaching lessons, one-on-ones with students, parents, and administrators likely was never given a second thought. But then the acceleration of the COVID virus and its devastating effects came in to play and a safety-first priority created a mad scramble to establish a remote learning environment. In the beginning, teachers had to quickly master many of the distant learning tools that now are key assets. Technology became the backbone of teaching and communicating through a remote learning platform transformed how teachers had to do their job.

In this era of the COVID pandemic, the complexity of teaching students remotely adds layers of challenges teachers had yet to face to say nothing of any depth of study around the consequences of this world-wide challenge. This research is being undertaken to explore the effects the pandemic has had on communication within an elementary school environment. It will explore two sides to this issue – first, how has the removal of face-to-face interaction had an impact on lesson planning and execution, the ability to effectively assess student progress, remote learning classroom management as well as a teacher's Professional Development priorities and needs. Second, our research will explore how relationships have been compromised and challenged with the absence of personal engagement? Teacher relationships clearly have been impacted with their students, students' parents, and administrators as well as the isolation factor witnessed between students.

**Figure 1**

*Overview of research study assessing how COVID has impacted an elementary teacher.*



We cannot fully appreciate the longer-term impact COVID-19 has had on students – yet. As such, research sources on the longer-term impact have been meager. What has been available are brief snapshots of experiences students, teachers, parents and administrators are going through along with prescriptive solutions. Frequently, these solution articles are based on small success stories innovative educators preemptively execute ahead of the pandemic’s full impact. Much of this author’s research is based on the learning and insights garnered from these efforts. And yet, no one really knows the long-term academic impact of this year of COVID-19. Dorn et al. (2020) has, however, undertaken a study that created three modeled epidemiological scenarios based on the degree the Pandemic is contained in the 2020/2021 school year. It forecasts the learning losses students will experience in each of these scenarios:

In the first – “virus contained” – in-class instruction resumes in fall 2020. In the second – “virus resurgence” – school closures and part-time schedules continue intermittently through 2020-21 school year, and in-school instruction does not fully resume before January 2021. In the third scenario – “pandemic escalation” – the virus controlled until vaccines are available, and schools operate remotely for the entire 2020-21 school year.

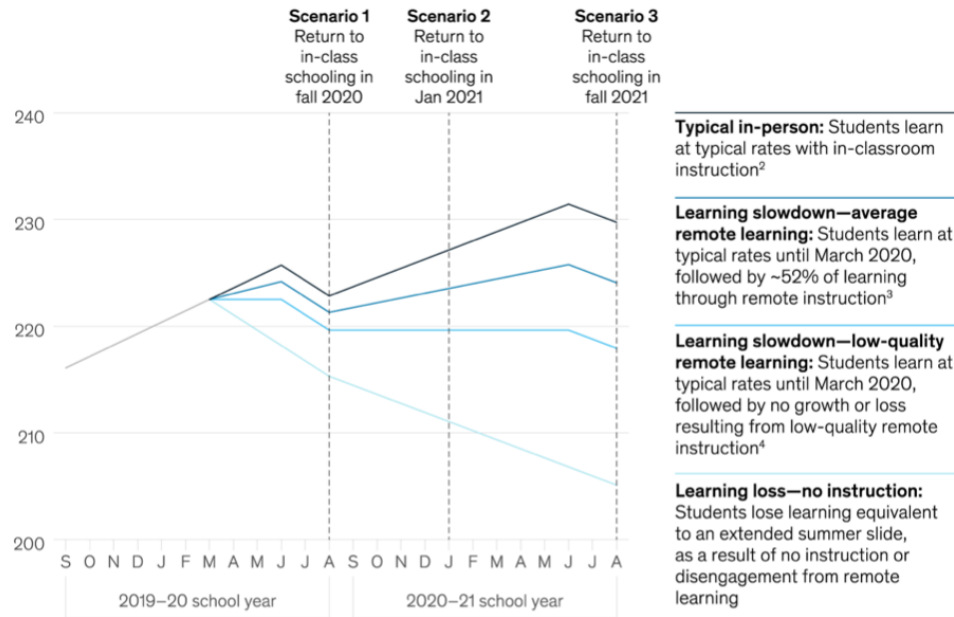
In our second scenario (in-class instruction does not resume until January 2021), we estimate that students who remain enrolled could lose three to four months of learning if they receive average remote instruction, seven to 11 months with lower-quality remote instruction, and 12-14 months if they do not receive any instruction at all. (Dorn et al., 2020)

In addition, an online survey was prepared and distributed probing for opinions from elementary school teachers on their experiences teaching remotely as well as the impact on relationship during the pandemic. The survey polled fifteen different Westchester, New York elementary schools. Unfortunately, even with a second request for support, the effort resulted in zero responses which this researcher believes (and confirmed with several Principals contacted), is as much a statement about ‘survey fatigue’. Regardless, these articles which provided the information for this research paper has yielded a breadth and depth of information. As this pandemic is far from over, hopefully, the insights and learning revealed through this research may be helpful for remote learning situations we may still face for future challenges elementary educators to confront.

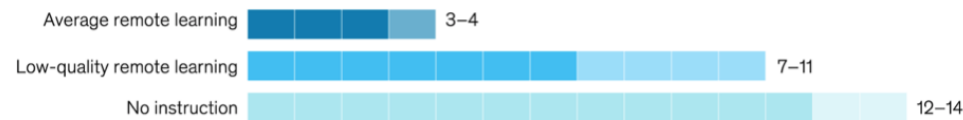
**Figure 2: Learning loss and school closures**

**In all three scenarios, students are at risk for significant learning loss.**

Projected 6th-grade math performance, example, NWEA<sup>1</sup> RIT Scores



**Average months of learning lost in scenario 2 compared with typical in-classroom learning**



<sup>1</sup>NWEA is a K-12 assessment provider serving over 9,500 schools across the US; their RIT scores are a standardized scaled score that measures student performance and progress.

<sup>2</sup>Normal school year growth rates estimated using NWEA data.

<sup>3</sup>52% assumed growth for high-quality instruction.

<sup>4</sup>0% assumed average growth for low-quality instruction. Rates of learning loss may differ by student groups.

Source: Megan Kuhfeld, Dennis Condon, and Doug Downey, *When does inequality grow?*, 2019; Center for Research on Education Outcomes, Online Charter Schools Study, 2015

McKinsey  
& Company

**Figure 2: Learning loss and school closures**

Note. In all three scenarios, students are at risk for significant learning loss. From “COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt that could last a lifetime”, by E. Dorn, B. Hancock, J. Sarakatsannis and E. Viruleg, 2020, *McKinsey & Co.*,

<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#>

## **Setting the Stage**

As has been noted, COVID-19 has had dramatic input on elementary, middle- and high-schools. The gravity of this impact was quantified through three surveys that were conducted by Cognia, an education nonprofit, in the U.S. and 22 other countries soliciting the opinions of thousands of teachers, parents and k-12 students in the Spring of 2020.

The survey explored the academic, emotional, and personal impact of the sudden shift to remote learning. Some of the findings:

- a. 80% of students reported having more work in a remote setting than in regular school.
- b. 67% of students, 60% of parents, and 94% of teachers said the assignments given during remote instruction were either “new and easy” or “something already learned”.
- c. However, 40% of students reported that assignments were difficult to complete.
- d. 68% of students reported being absent from school most (26%) or some (42%) days.
- e. 44% of parents reported that for children, key routines (such as teacher greeting students at the beginning of class, setting clear expectations, rehearsing group learning practices) were inconsistent from class to class, or not established at all.
- f. 70% of teachers said preparing and teaching took significantly more time than before.
- g. Most teachers said they spent more time communicating with students and parents, leaving little time to learn new teaching approaches and share ideas with colleagues.
- h. 57% of parents and 61% of students worried about being prepared for the next grade. There were worries about this at the middle- and high-school level.
- i. 71% of students and 80% of parents reported that students felt lonely most of the days or some days.

- j. 42% of teachers said remote teaching was harder than expected.
- k. 99% of teachers said they missed their school life, and 90% felt disconnected from colleagues. (Elgart, 2021)

Although such facts and figures are likely not a surprise, the call-to-arms to account for the vulnerabilities, assess, analyze and solve for the future is a mandate that ought to be at the forefront of all educators and administrator's minds.

### **Trauma as a Consequence**

Clearly, the impact of the pandemic has touched every aspect of teaching with very real consequences. Research has indicated that chronic stress and trauma can affect the brain in a variety of ways. Minkos et al. (2020) points out that:

Children can have difficulty processing emotional and social responses, sustaining attention, and utilizing memory effectively. This can manifest in behaviors such as hyper arousal, hypervigilance, and physical aggression (Swick et al., 2013). Young children may exhibit irritability, crying, regression of skills, clinging behavior, bed-wetting, somatic complaints, withdrawal, and nightmares. These behaviors can lead to long-term effects that may include a variety of mental health issues (e.g., depression, anxiety, adjustment disorders, posttraumatic stress disorder), as well as interpersonal or academic difficulties (Madrid et al., 2006). In addition to psychological and neurological implications, schools must be prepared to address a wide variety of academic needs that will naturally arise as a result from prolonged school closure.

This 'heavy-load' of behavioral and academic needs teachers must shoulder is particularly broad and includes Classroom Management (which now must include a new set of home-based rules and policies), lesson planning and execution, assessment as well as relationship development.

### **Literature Review**



## **I. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES & LEARNING**

- 1. Elementary Lesson Planning & Execution**
  - 2. Assessment**
  - 3. Classroom Management**
  - 4. Professional Development**
- 

### **1. ELEMENTARY LESSON PLANNING & EXECUTION**

The ability to develop and execute a day's set of lessons involves many considerations all of which pivot on communication as it filtered through a Distant Learning environment. Lessons must follow state-based guidelines and learning milestones, adhere to any school teaching policies, stay in lock-step with one's colleague's pace and adapt to the varied learning needs of the classroom population – regardless of proximity to the student. With the introduction of remote learning, teachers have to contend with a myriad of considerations around the student's home environment to optimize learning and understanding.

Important factors that may influence a child's success include home educational resources (i.e., computer, internet connection), availability of a quiet workspace, parental education level, parents' fluency in the language of instruction, parents' competency with digital media, and parents' engagement with schools. (Minkos et al., 2020)

Teaching with technology has also provided several other challenges that required learning in real-time, on the job. "This reflection by one teacher about teaching remotely highlights some important aspects of the experiences encountered:

Sometimes I think I have this, and other times, I all of a sudden feel disoriented to where the white-board is or to remember to share my screen and I know I'm experiencing that awkward feeling of being a novice. I guess this is what learning something news is all about... little steps to begin with, sometime a few steps back, all before that feeling of confidence of knowing the space, the content, the context." (as cited in Hall, 2020, p. 315)

In interviews with several Westchester, NY elementary school teachers, this researcher learned of the multiple model changes teachers have had to adapt to that impact lesson execution. In one instance, three separate models were instituted in part, due to parental push-back to previous models and legal concerns of “educational neglect”. Conclusions that students should not be on Zoom all day mitigated online all-day schedules and prompted Cohort A and B orientations. And with each tweak and adjustment, the biggest casualties were the students who consistently had to adjust and adapt to new schedules, as well as the on-going sense of loneliness and isolation.

It is also likely that a number of schools will return to some form of virtual education in the near future. This may require teachers to utilize the principals of universal design when developing online lessons. The concepts of universal design in education is to develop instruction so it is as accessible as possible for all students (Hall et al., 2003). Practically, this involves providing common accommodations to all students including multiple ways of presenting information, multiple ways for students to engage with instructional materials, and multiple ways for students to demonstrate their understanding of material. (Minkos et al., 2020)

## **Lessons Learned**

The saying goes “Necessity is the mother of invention” ... One teacher this researcher met with described the challenges (and solutions) of teaching to students remotely and the impossible task of hosting small group instruction - remotely. Obviously, in a classroom environment, such things are possible when the teacher can host a small group while keeping one eye on the rest of her class. But how does one host a small group and the rest of the class remotely? Bring in your own laptop and a set of Air pods and host the larger class on the school’s laptop (working independently) with Air pods connected and within the personal laptop, the small group instruction is also hosted... not easy, but one way to support students in need of individual support.

The major lesson from this pandemic is likely that a one size fits all approach to education is not efficient, effective, or sustainable. The universal design for learning framework provides a

valuable lesson approach in supporting students' highly varied needs during this unusual time. (Minkos et al., 2020)

1. No teaching is ever perfect! If we waited until we reached perfection, the opportunity to be in the space with the students when they needed us most, would be missed. The saying, originally by Voltaire and reimaged by entrepreneurs that “perfection is the enemy of good” is a guiding principle to our approach.
2. Experiment and explore new ways of teaching and strategies to engage learners, using the motto Experiment, Fail, Learn, Repeat as a framework for practice.
3. Do not underestimate the value of social connection and inclusion for both students and teaching staff.
4. Students understand and appreciate authentic behavior and language. For instance, when we introduced new technology initially, we told students we were novices, and they understood, appreciated our honesty, and felt less vulnerable themselves.
5. Providing face to face workshops and asynchronous learning is not enough. We must provide real-time online opportunities for students to engage with us and each other.
6. Sometimes we need to react and react fast.
7. The experience further developed team resilience and a culture of reflection and deepening of relationships with each other and with students. (Hall, 2020 p. 313)

## **2. ASSESSMENT**

If one considers all that goes in to assessing a student's academic progress, it is reasonable to assume that much of academic assessment has been compromised by the physical absence of the

student and the way assessment relies so heavily on one-on-one communication. This challenge applies to the everyday formative assessments a teacher leverages to insure his or her student is staying on pace to the more substantive summative assessments relied upon for performance and grades. The quantity and quality of a virtual learning environment will vary considerably and the potential for student's ability to retain information covered during that learning period could easily be impacted. This issue could be further magnified by adverse childhood events in their home environment.

**Summer Setback** – [This inability to retain information] will be similar to the return from summer break except that for some students the academic break will have been significantly longer than the typical summer break. Almost forty years of research on the “summer setback” has indicated that it disproportionately impacts students with disabilities and students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (Johnston, et al., 2015). Reading achievement is more impacted than math achievement (Allington & McGill-Franzen, 2003) and students from his SES families actually demonstrate reading gains over the summer (McCoach et al., 2006). It is likely that students from high SES backgrounds will have had greater access to educational opportunities both virtually and through home-based enrichment so may not experience the same level of “COVID setback.” (as cited in Minkos, et al. 2020)

### **Inabilities to Sense Engagement**

During COVID when both teachers and students were working from home (WFH), many teachers note the disorienting feeling of not being able to walk around the physical teaching space and among their students. This inability to read the room and the non-verbal communication that is part of any level of formative assessment was wiped clean. Add to that, the challenges of hosting lessons which dominate the teacher's laptop to the exclusion of most of the student's faces. Toggling back and forth, up and down to simply ensure student engagement (versus concept understanding) has further eroded the basics of formative assessment.

These sentiments were reinforced in a recent blog post on EduResearch Matters, under the title *Sensing our Students*, the author, Vlies (2020) highlights comments from other teachers when asked what they found most challenging about online teaching. Vlies

commented that [she missed] “hearing them breathe,” while other talked about sensing their engagement,” noticing when things don’t make sense.” These reflections are important as they remind us that when we teach authentically, we are fully in the moment with students, noticing and listening, looking for connection, interaction, and signs of learning. (as cited in Hall, 2020 p. 312)

### **More RTI’s**

A further consequence of remote learning is the notion that administrators can be faced with increased concern around a student’s progress (or lack thereof) and the subsequent need for many more Response-To-Interventions (R.T.I). In interviews of Westchester, New York schools, this researcher learned that many administrators face the daunting challenge of various tiers of assessment testing as parents and teachers register concern for certain challenged students. The ambiguity of learning situation or student capabilities, mandates testing which adds workload, paperwork and follow up. In one Westchester elementary school, as a response to these on-going concerns, the Administrators have adjusted their Summer School curriculum to account for such learning losses and with careful student placement. For maximum efficiency, students are grouped in to distinct areas they have struggles with and then Tier 2 or Tier 3 level interventions are applied. A keen focus of this summer school is Social and Emotional support by making the academic subject matter fun and interactive (how does mathematics come in to play while building a bridge with popsicle sticks?)

### **Lessons Learned**

1. Speed and efficiency in the context of the pandemic will be particularly important to identify students in need of targeted, Tier 2 interventions to address academic skill deficits.
2. Regular analysis of universal screening data will be important in facilitating this process as well as selecting appropriate cut scores to identify students in need of additional support. (Cut scores may have to be adjusted in comparison to before the pandemic.)

3. Educators will need to use additional diagnostic assessment data as needed to connect students with appropriate, evidence-based interventions to address specific areas in need of support.
4. Valid and reliable monitoring measures will need to be used and analyzed at regular intervals to evaluate student growth and inform modifications to interventions when necessary.
5. Establishing and implementing decision-making rules will help to facilitate this process and will be important in determining when a student may be in need of intensive, Tier 3 supports. (Minkos et al. 2020)

### **3. CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT**

Simply put, classroom management refers to the wide variety of skills and techniques that teachers use to ensure that their classroom runs smoothly, without disruptive behavior from students. In interviews this researcher hosted with several elementary school teachers, the observations all stemmed from the same reference point –

*“How can I deliver a structured learning environment within the context of remote learning that hinges on communicating clear rules that promote learning as well as consequences that diminish or eliminates behaviors that get in the way of learning?”*

Communicating such rules within the context of remote learning as well as those rules themselves tailored to the remote learning environment adds complications to an already challenging situation. Clearly, at the onset of the 2020/2021 school year, teachers had been acquainted with several months of remote learning from the Spring of 2020. Still, as teachers began to prepare for what could be a year of remote learning many questions percolated to the top revolving around classroom management –

***How do I ...***

1. Build a classroom culture and routines if they are all at home?
2. Establish relationships with my students whom I haven't met in person?

3. Adapt instruction shaped by assumptions of limitations of physical environments I haven't yet seen?
4. Develop rules of engagement when engagement is through my laptop?
5. How can I be assured my student is doing their own work when I see that "helicopter parent's" shadow hovering just within my view?
6. Solve for those all-important one-on-one meetings with my students during a school day when I won't be able to keep one eye on the rest of my students?
7. Gauge engagement and understanding absent seeing those body-language cues?

These are the questions every experienced teacher had to solve for and most did so through trial and error, collaboration and experimentation. Then, as this 2020/2021 year advanced and in-school migrations began to take shape, different classroom management questions also began to surface –

8. Operationally, what are the rules of social-distancing when I have to configure my classroom?
9. What are the Cohort A and Cohort B associated new schedules we must adhere to?
10. How much time out of my instruction must be allotted for interval cleaning?
11. How do I plan for small group instruction work so it lines up with a staggered bus schedule?

Schwartz (2020) highlights "This will be taking me back to my own childhood, when [students are] all sitting in their desks with their own notebooks, and the teacher is calling on them," said Cathy Burge, a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher in Holmen, Wis., whose students usually sit in groups at trapezoid tables. I think we really need to be honest with parents... [in-person school is] not going to be what they remember from last year. I think that open dialog is going to be really important," she said. For teachers, uncertainty can make it hard to prepare. "Until I know what is happening, I don't want to do all this planning and then not use it," said Laura Haddad, a high school English teacher and technology coach in Glastonbury, Conn. (para. 4)

Three priorities for instruction have been identified that have applicability regardless of learning environment each of which revolve around communication. Communication between students,

teachers and parents is essential to re-engage students in school – especially so, if an online platform is still in play.

**Frequent, meaningful engagement** – It is recommended that each student has meaningful interaction with at least one educator every day. In a virtual setting, this could look like a synchronous advisory or morning meeting. Regardless of method, communication should not overburden teachers.

**Cognitively demanding work** – Even in a a fully remote environment, students should have the opportunity for synchronous or asynchronous discussion, personalized feedback from teachers, and coaching. They should analyze test, working through complicated math problems, and testing hypotheses, independently and together with other students.

**Responding to formative assessment** – [As has been noted earlier, ‘summer setback’ could have had a delaying effect from learning from the previous Spring] figuring out where gaps might prevent students from understanding grade-level content is especially important. Experts recommend against starting the year with a formalized standardized test, instead advising teachers to use formative assessment to figure out where students might need extra support to engage with work. (Schwartz, 2020.)

## **Lessons Learned**

Through interviews with local elementary school teachers, following are suggested solutions to the challenges of remote classroom management

### **How do I...**

1. Build a classroom culture and routines if they are all at home?

*“Routines are everything. We have to establish a schedule and rhythm with the Pledge (of Allegiance), attendance, etc. Then show them the day’s schedule and don’t veer from that pattern. Can’t have variation. At home, it’s no different than school...I try to be highly organized with bins holding (the students) different work materials. When we are done with a subject, I tell them to put those items away and go on to the next. We write everything down too. Repetition grooms consistency. We have to create a sense of normalcy.”*



2. Establish relationships with my students whom I haven't met in person?

*"Before the school year began, I sent each of my students a letter introducing myself and provided a bit of background about me, my family, what my summer included. I offered some insights about my hobbies and interests and expressed a lot of interest who they were. I also set the stage for the upcoming year acknowledging the remote learning environment we would be facing but emphasized my confidence that we will still have a fun, learning year. Once in school, I look to have lunch with my students or a snack and just listen. I may not be watching all of them but I hear everything. And then there's literacy. You pick a very engaging book and they get so immersed in the story and all those initial inhibitions melt away."*

3. Adapt instruction shaped by assumptions of limitations of physical environments I haven't yet seen?

*"This was the hardest part... In the beginning, once we left the school, we could not go back in. We had to think out-of-the-box and figure it out. We'd use KAMI or find other work-arounds online. But we also shared answers with each other and that's where collaboration came in to play. Your teaching peers are your partners and someone always has a better solution."*

4. Develop rules of engagement when engagement is through my laptop?

*"Students all know about classroom rules... the idea is no different when they are home. If I have younger students, we'd review them frequently... 'Show me your hands if you want to ask a question....' Kids who've had practice from last year (working remotely), remember and already knew what was acceptable. One has to be careful though, about who is participating. Consequences are tough... I typically position the waiting room as where students will sit if they are disruptive. But I also understand, there's only so much I can do. I am there to teach. I'll document bad behavior because you have to have to data... but rarely does it get that out of hand."*

5. How can I be assured my student is doing their own work when I see that "helicopter parent's" shadow hovering just within my view?

*“Guidelines are sent out by the school district at the start of the school year outlining expectations. Of course, younger kids need parental help in the beginning but they catch on very quickly. But part of those guidelines are ‘contractual relationships’ one has with the school about how to dress, not in their beds, in a quiet place (if possible)... basically, they have to show up as if they are in school.”*

6. Solve for those all-important one-on-one meetings with my students during a school day when I won’t be able to keep one eye on the rest of my students?

*“The Chat Room is a great solution. If I have to speak with one of my students, I send them a private chat note and ask them to stay a minute after I shut down my lesson. Kids usually want to stay after the class to maintain the relationship. But overall, the Chat Room is my go-to for such discussions to help, to explain or to be sure the nonsense I saw doesn’t happen again.”*

7. Gauge engagement and understanding absent seeing those body-language cues?

*“You have to be a multi-tasker. For a young, inexperienced teacher, this can be exhausting... watching the screen, watching their bodies... toggling up and down to see everyone, while focusing on the curriculum. But practice helps and again.... You do the best you can.”*

#### **4. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In today’s era of COVID-19 and distant learning, a student’s need to ‘learn to learn’ requires more attention to both cognitive and metacognitive strategies which focuses on deeper learning. Interwoven with these learning experiences is the understood social and emotional support needs that likely have been amplified due to the pandemic. The ability to successfully help these students relies on investing in high quality Professional Development (P.D.). Ingredients of such a focused curriculum includes a coherent vision, well-defined standards and research-based practices. All of which adheres to matching the educator opportunities to the unique needs this environment has generated.

These needs focus on:

**1. Enhancing computer instructional technology –**

Survey results from the 2018 TALIS study, representing 260,000 teachers across 48 countries, showed that the use of instructional computer technology (ICT) was part of the initial preparation of just under 60% of teachers...

The odds of allowing students to use ICT for their schoolwork or projects was much higher for those who experienced preparation for the use. Overall, 53% of teachers reported allowing students to use computers in these ways in 2018. The proportion is not doubt increasing, and teacher education will play an important role not only in supporting this use but supporting innovative pedagogical approaches (OECD 2019). (Darling-Hammond, L., et al. 2020)

**2. Engendering authentic and meaningful learning –**

The 2018 TALIS surveys found that fewer than 60% of teachers reported giving tasks that require students to think critically, just under half have students work in small groups to come up with a solution or let students solve complex tasks, only one third give students tasks for which there is no obvious solution. And fewer than 30% give students extended project work (OECD 2019). (Darling-Hammond, L., et al. 2020)

**3. Strengthening Formative Assessments –**

As noted earlier, formative assessments (albeit within a distant learning environment) early in the school year will provide a more accurate gauge of a student's current academic capabilities versus a summative review. Yet, mastering the means to assess remotely – especially for the less experienced teacher, could require Professional Development support.

**4. Support Mentoring -**

Given that the 2020/2021 school year required a mix of online, hybrid and in-person instruction, policymakers and administrators have experienced increased attrition from tenured teachers who no longer had the appetite for this teaching environment. Add to that, many teachers – novice, veteran and student teachers all, still had to learn new digital tools and teaching strategies. Administrators orchestrating Professional Development classes have supported in-school collaboration and mentoring from

teachers who have successfully mastered this new arena. However, one consideration is to incent these experts with “micro-credentialing” such efforts. This notion of awarding P.D. certification could include several topics including 1. Distant-Learning Classroom Management; 2) Designing Online Performance-Related Assessments; 3) Support Strategies for Social/Emotional Learning and 4) Trauma-Informed Support.

## **Lessons Learned**

Cognia, an education non-profit, conducted several surveys and in the process spoke with numerous school leaders and found four key areas of focus – Rigor, Routines, Relationships and Resources. Mark Elgart, who oversees Cognia, “says that in schools that have weathered the crisis with the greatest success, leaders orchestrate learning within these four areas [and] expose teachers to models of effective online instruction, customize learning to each teacher’s needs, and schedule frequent collaboration among teachers” (Elgart, 2021).

### *Rigor –*

Several factors have conspired to reduce academic demand: the unfamiliarity of tech connections for teachers and students; the impossibility of being synchronous for the same number of hours per day as in-person time pre-pandemic; teachers’ challenges monitoring students’ engagement and gauging their readiness to take on new ideas and skills; students distracted by their home environment; problems with bandwidth and access to the right devices; availability of supplies and manipulatives for all students; and educators’ difficulty checking in with all students academically and personally.

How can students get advanced and interesting work, including independent assignments, group inquiry, and project-based learning [without the grooming of teachers through Professional Development seminars, tutorials and mentorship?]

### *Routines –*

Learning the new procedures and expectations of online schooling has been particularly difficult for elementary and middle-school children: arriving on time for lessons, how to participate in class, interacting with peers, when to study, and more. The schools that

have been most successful with remote learning have worked closely with families on setting up routines with their children: getting out of bed at the same time every day, dressing in school clothes, eating on the same schedule, and behaving as consistently during the online school day as they did with in-person schooling.

#### *Relationships –*

This was the area in which educators got the highest marks in the Cognia surveys: 92% of parents said they had more appreciation for teachers' expertise, 93% said teachers checked in regularly to make sure students had everything they needed, 96% said teachers showed genuine concern for their children's learning, and 97% said teachers and administrators made themselves available at families' convenience. This means the message for educators in this area is, *Keep up the good work.*

#### *Resources –*

There are still gaps with Internet access, laptops and tablets, and other key resources, not to mention PD for teachers to take full advantage of the resources they have – and many schools face budget challenges.

“The pandemic has shined a bright light on systemic inequities in K-12 education and on the urgent need to provide stronger professional support to teachers,” concludes Elgart. He sees hope in the way some schools have adapted to the crisis: “Their practices could even lead to an instructional renaissance, pointing the way toward new kinds of technology-mediated and student-directed learning, enabling us to open up our classrooms, change teachers' work for the better, and allow students to learn anywhere, anytime, and anyplace. Educators need to ask themselves whether specific classroom practices are vestigial remnants of an old way of doing business, or whether they truly support equitable and engaging instruction, paying special attention to the learning challenges young people face every day.” (Elgart, 2021)

---

## **II. COMMUNICATION CHALLENGES & ELEMENTARY SCHOOL RELATIONSHIPS**

- 1. Teacher / Student**
  - 2. Teacher / Parent**
  - 3. Teacher / Administrator**
  - 4. Teacher / Teacher**
- 

### **1. TEACHER / STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS**

*“In the beginning of the year, you have to fake it... a lot. You read the vibe and stay very upbeat. The kids get to know you through activities and you have to show a lot of interest. Tell me about yourself... what do you like to do? Write to me about something you love. Forming common bonds is so important and.... books! Finding a good story that gets students rapt in the story quickly dissolves barriers.”*

Victoria Davis

3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Elementary School Teacher

Jefferson Elementary School, New Rochelle, NY

(27-year veteran teacher)

As has been observed within the considerations around Classroom Management, the notion of establishing a relationship with one's students is all about in-person proximity. And, in the absence of that, one has to work that much harder, and longer. Of course, a nice letter of introduction from a teacher in late Summer can set the stage but it's all about those “Good Mornings” and high-fives when students first walk in to the classroom and those positive acknowledgements when someone does something terrific as well as establishing right proper level of respect and understanding around behavior and learning. All of that has been compromised due to the distant learning elementary school teachers have faced. Add to that complexity was the initial isolation students were abruptly exposed to from the previous Spring and the absence of relationship closure with their teachers from that year. In interviews with

elementary school teachers this researcher conducted, many felt it took several weeks to begin to thaw out student reservations.

## **Trauma**

While addressing academic skills after the extended school year closure remains an important objective, students will not be ready to engage in formal learning until they feel safe, both physically and psychologically. (American School Counselor Association & National Association of School Psychologists [ASCA & NASP]. Therefore, educators should begin by prioritizing social-emotional well-being over academic gains in the short-term upon re-entry.

Consistency is a key aspect of supporting children in recovering from stressful and potentially traumatic experiences (Swick et al. 2013).

Building Resilience – According to the National Child Traumatic Stress Network (NCTSN, 2017), an important component of Tier 1 supports within trauma-informed multi-tiered system of supports involves providing psychoeducation to students about the effects of stress and trauma on the body, as well as how to utilize healthy coping skills. Such lessons revolve around teaching children the ability to stay resilient and calm under pressure. (Minkos et al. 2020)

## **Lessons Learned**

Many students may not have had the opportunity to say goodbye to their teachers from the previous school year; therefore, schools might consider created opportunities for students to reconnect with the previous teacher. The same can be said for reconnecting with peers from the previous year. Whole school and classroom celebrations will be important to rebuilding the school community, however gatherings of large groups may be prohibited. Thoughtfully planned celebrations in a way that supports social distancing and nurtures relationships built from the previous year will strengthen the school community.

Mindfulness-based interventions in schools improve resilience and positive coping in the face of challenges. These interventions help students develop a greater sense of moment-

to-moment awareness and acceptance by engaging in activities that involve focusing one's attention on something specific and learning to notice and refocus attention when distracted. (Minkos et al. 2020)

## **2. TEACHER / PARENT RELATIONSHIPS**

It goes without saying, healthy and supportive Parent/Teacher relationships are fundamental toward a successful academic experience for the student. However, research \* shows that all too often the dynamic between teachers and parents is one of advice-givers and advice-seekers. The notion of a two-way dialog that is founded on informed conversation and mutual understanding does not happen enough and ought to be the goal of every teacher. Parent/Teacher conferences are dominated by academic issues, progress and/or behavior issues instead of a keen focus on how best to work together. One area that should remain a high priority is helping parents with effective at-home learning strategies. This is increasingly important during these times when remote learning is more the rule than the exception.

### **5 Key Topics –**

Teachers were asked to give examples of their relationship with parents and how they communicate with parents, in parent-teacher conferences or other contact moments, focusing on the following themes:

1. Creating a trustful relationship. We asked teacher how they build a trustful relationship with parents, what contact they have with parents and how they stay in touch with them (approachability).
2. Searching for agreement. We asked teachers how they discuss the child's development with parents and how they come to agree on reciprocal expectations and ambitions concerning the child's development. Teachers were also asked how they discuss their respective tasks and responsibilities with parents.

---

\* The research referred to in this paper occurred in 2019 prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, this researcher felt the findings do have application to the current remote learning environment and thus have been included.



3. Learning at home. We asked the teachers about how they support parents in children's homework assistance.
4. Decision-making. Teachers were asked how they involve parents in child-related decisions, especially concerning children with special education needs.
5. Themes and conflicts. Teachers were asked which other subjects – apart from the aforementioned themes – they discuss with parents, which subjects are difficult to discuss and how conflicts arising from opposing perspectives concerning the child's needs are handled.

### **Lessons Learned (Proven Performers) –**

#### **Creating a trustful relationship Insights -**

1. Built upon openness of the school, and informal contact by the teacher to the parents.
2. Regular and direct outreach to the parents to come to the school and classroom.
3. Consistently available to the parents. (Such contact is conditional on building a trustful relationship.)
4. For Special Education students, teachers will rely on take-home notebooks to stay abreast of situations at home as well as relay classroom news.

#### **Searching for Agreement Insights –**

1. Building trust is essential but demonstrating interest in the priorities and aspirations parents have for their children in the early part of a school year is unique (seldom done) but refreshingly valued. This is especially true of parents of special education children. However, a balance must be found between teachers' and parents' ambitions. Teachers explicitly accept and fully grasp what is and isn't possible within the confines of a disability. Although always aspiring to do and achieve more is the rule, managing expectations through effective communication and gaining alignment on academic goals is key.
2. Proactively translating learning results and test scores in to simpler, more easy to comprehend outputs allows for school advice on secondary schools to make sense and remove the surprise factor if aspirations do not match academic capabilities.

3. Providing a pre-conference check-in sheet for parents allows for time to digest status, understand opportunities and challenges the teacher has observed and come prepared with questions allowing for an efficient and productive discussion.
4. Peace of Mind: “Sometimes you have to leave the parents in peace about what they should be doing at home because they are not able to do it. Instead you say to the parents: “I will take this burden from you, I will take care of your child.” (Leenders, et. Al. 2019)

### **Supporting Parents in Children’s Homework Assistance**

1. Pre-COVID, in this study, teachers frequently would only discuss homework during parent evenings or report card meetings. In interviews this researcher has conducted, such communication has changed dramatically. Significantly more time has been spent by teachers providing clear direction and expectations. Unfortunately, that was the tempo when remote learning was the rule. Now, as students are now back in school, it will be important to find an acceptable compromise between too little direction for parents and an overwhelming workload of such information.

### **Decision-Making (for Special Care Children)**

1. In the Dutch education system (from which this study was used), it is their policy to support the inclusion of children with special needs within mainstream schools. Within this system, it was noted that teachers assume that parents are familiar and aligned with the support capabilities provided. Unfortunately, that assumption can impact decision-making between parent and teacher unless the teacher can provide a complete understanding of the services recommended. Within these days of COVID, Zoom conferences appear to be an adequate information exchange platform to agree and align on academic and social-emotional support strategies.

### **Difficult Themes and Conflicts**

Four primary categories were identified as difficult topics to discuss and review –

1. Social-Emotional Development – bullying; behavioral problems; sexuality
2. Educational Questions & Problems – difficult behavior at home and dealing with puberty issues to not listening and being irreverent
3. Alarming Issues at Home – Divorce; physical and sexual abuse or incest; neglect, debt and poverty, sickness or a parent, alcoholism, refusal to take medication
4. Angry Parents – Emotional exchanges which can be based on disagreements to mis-steps or simple misunderstanding

Alarming Issues at Home – teachers try to make parents conscious of the problem and the need for help, and persistently ask how they can help them, while at the same time trying to empower the parents by letting them fulfill tasks at school.

In Discussing Poverty - , teachers initiate the subject because parents are too ashamed or choose to ignore the problem. Unfortunately, again, they persistently try to help but frequently fail.

In the Case of Abuse - , the problem is a proactive one and the child is taken along in the process – the child is the central figure here: the trust within the parent-teacher relationship is protected and the child is empowered at the same time.

Angry Parents – in all cases, teachers remain calm and give parents the opportunity to blow off steam and become calm again. Teachers should be prepared to admit possible mistakes by the school – even small ones yet are sensitive to deep emotions of parents. Teachers showing vulnerability contribute to the restoration of the trusting relationship. In seeking solutions, teachers do this in concert with parents. If a parent cannot calm down, then closing down the meeting and rescheduling the appointment is recommended (“If you continue with this dialog, I cannot talk with you and will look to reschedule this appointment.”).

### **3. TEACHER / ADMINISTRATOR RELATIONSHIPS**

Unfortunately, not much has been documented acknowledging the Teacher / Administrator dynamic in these days of COVID. However, within interviews conducted by this researcher, both teachers and administrators acknowledge the ‘arm’s length’ relationship the two have experienced during the pandemic. Per the Assistant Principal in one local Elementary School, “All last Spring and in to this year, I did significantly less in-person meetings. With no vaccine at hand, I stayed in my office. Unfortunately, that created a lack of transparency as any policy changes (and there were many) had to trickle down to the few senior teachers I did have interaction with.” This, at times, did create frustration and tension as many teachers did feel out of touch and not engaged for decisions that impacted their world. At other times, policy decisions were made at the district level and these administrators were simply the messenger.

Typically, as an administrator, there are many, frequent visits to all of the classes to check in and gauge progress. Unfortunately, that level of vulnerability throughout 2020 and the early portion of 2021, obliged this administrator (and likely most others) to be very cautious about exposure. Not surprisingly, unlike the teachers on hand, Administrators are exposed to all grade students, and teachers and support staff and parents. The degree of exposure goes up exponentially when one is an administrator. And yet, progress had to continue. Solutions resulted in many more Zoom meetings even if the participants were all in the same building. This held true for Faculty Meetings as well as Professional Development sessions. And, like the exposure quotient, the complexity of logistics went up equally as much. Ultimately, most teachers acknowledged the increased level of work administrators were now facing and did the best they could in those absences.

## **Lessons Learned**

1. Communication between Administrators and Teachers were compromised out of necessity during the Pandemic and, as a result, decision transparency was compromised. Just like teachers who acknowledge the significantly increased level of communication they’ve had to exercise with students and parents, Administrators have had to increase their own levels to ensure awareness and understanding of decision from either the District Office or specific to the school the preside over.

#### **4. TEACHER / TEACHER RELATIONSHIPS**

The relationships teachers have with each other, this researcher has learned, is one of shared respect, collaboration and open communication. “Teachers belong to a cultural group whose role has multiple demands such as collaborating with other teachers as school colleagues, advocating for the students, creating partnerships with parents, and maintaining professionalism throughout each of these responsibilities. Merton (1957) coined the term “role set” to describe these multiple social demands on the teacher by distinguishing a role set as a “complex of roles associated with a single social status” (as cited in Lipsky, et al. 2017).

As part of a teaching team, teachers, each, have an equal stake toward ensuring the success of their team and their students. Critical qualities include open minds, strong work ethics, creativity and good leadership. The notion of working together, acknowledging each other’s strengths and talents, and allowing, if not encouraging, individuality are fundamental features of healthy working relationships. On the other hand, weak links do test the team dynamic.

“It is generally agreed that a strong team can bring huge benefits to students, but what if a team is not so strong? "Teachers love the idea of teaming, but it is very important to remember that any team is only as strong as its weakest link," warned Dr. Layne Hunt, principal at Monroe (Michigan) High School.

"It is incumbent upon each member of any team to strive to be the strongest member of the team," added Hunt, cautioning that "there can be a fine line between striving to be one of the strongest members of a team and appearing to be trying to distinguish yourself from the team members. Confident, capable, and compassionate team members know the difference while weak, insecure, and marginally capable team members do not. A team that has even one of the latter types could be destined for disaster.

"Students will not succeed if faced with a group of teachers whose work together is disjointed, disconnected, or, in some cases, dysfunctional." (Hopkins, 2017)

#### **Lessons Learned**

Teachers who team best together need to consider partner attributes that hold six specific priorities –

1. Genuine and sincere respect for and trust and confidants in their colleagues
  2. Willingness to share ideas and resources
  3. Desire to establish common grade-level goals and protocols
  4. Willingness to divvy up responsibilities in a fair, equitable way
  5. Strong and positive endorsement of the notion of inclusion
  6. An embrace of a collegiality mindset (In other words, they're not going to try to show up the colleague; they don't think "I'm better or more talented than you are.")
- (Hopkins, 2017)

## **Research Methodology**

### **Participants**

Elementary School teachers (K-5) within Westchester, New York were targeted for participation.

### **Procedure -**

1. A Google Survey had been identified as a means to collect data on the perceptions these teaching professionals had around the two topics – Communication Challenges in both 1) Learning and 2) Relationship Development in times of COVID.
2. The survey held six sections made up of 26 questions that typically provided a statement and asked for levels (1 – 5) of agreement (or disagreement).
3. Timing to take the test was 11 minutes (and presented as such to minimize time requirement concern).
4. Fifteen elementary schools had been identified within Westchester County that held a diverse socio-economic profile.
5. A letter of introduction and request for participation was prepared and approved by the EDU-5550 instructor, Dr. Vance Austin, and was emailed to each of the school Principals.
6. After a three-week hiatus (and no participation) and second email follow up had been prepped and sent out to prompt distribution.

7. Three Principals replied with apologies for not sending initially but noted the likelihood of completing low simply due to the hectic nature of hybrid teaching and survey fatigue.

## **Results**

Unfortunately, there are no results to be analyzed. I have received zero responses beyond the initial testing I prepared. As noted by the responding Principals, one might conclude both being busy and survey fatigue are the likely causes for the absence of any results. But one never knows if, as has been observed, the administrative gymnastics Principals have had to experience but easily be a contributing factor around consistent distribution as well.

## **Conclusion**

There are no great epiphanies about how the COVID pandemic has impacted the art of teaching. It has had a devastating effect simply by obliging distance to a discipline that really requires personal engagement. Clearly, there's been an abundance of victims within this arena of teaching – most obvious being the students who have been isolated and left to handle the trauma of family pressures compounded by remote learning. And, then there are the teachers who have had to shoulder a huge unanticipated burden involving hours of technology mysteries, hours of tailored lesson creation and hours of unexpected hurdles. Communication within the teaching ranks, being a linchpin of every dimension of teaching, has required so many alternative means to relay messages that it certainly didn't achieve the impact of one-on-one dialog. And yet, teaching has proceeded. It is a tribute to the perseverance and collaboration teachers have within their DNA that has created stronger, greater resilience which will serve students around the world if a challenge of this magnitude ever confronts us again.

This study faced three significant limitations as it evolved. First, the fact that the COVID Pandemic really only took hold 16 months ago, did not trigger a huge wealth of peer-reviewed research. Certainly, in these months since Pandemic many research articles have been written but most focus on brief trials solving for certain aspects of teaching or major issues like trauma.

The second challenge was simply the unique focus of communication as an impacted feature within teaching, within the Pandemic and was not a topic that had been heavily investigated. In most of the peer-reviewed articles that were discovered, the notion of communication as something of consideration was frequently a side-bar series of observations. Albeit, still valid and applicable information, that modest amount of information required additional legwork through one-on-one interviews. Those meetings with teachers, administrators and parents helped tell the story in a much more vivid fashion. The third limitation focuses on lack of engagement. Part of this research effort was to poll teachers in the field for their perspective and capture that data through a survey. As has been noted, with over 15 elementary schools contacted (and re-contacted), not one survey was completed. Of course, the bottleneck could easily have been the Principal, who, like all administrators had much to contend with. But, as has been acknowledged by three apologetic Principals for the possibility of no engagement, “survey fatigue” became the third very legitimate limitation towards a thorough research effort.

In the future, this researcher believes teachers-at-large will be readily prepared for anything of this magnitude and will have the experience to navigate around, over and through those challenges. But with that said the following quote seems to have the best recommendation toward caring for students.

### **References**

- Darling-Hammond, L., & Hyler, M., (2020). Preparing educators for the time of COVID... and beyond, *European Journal of Teacher Education*, 43 (4), 457-465, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02619768.2020.1816961>
- Dorn, E., Hancock, B., Sarakatsannis, J., & Viruleg, E. (2020, June 1). *COVID-19 and student learning in the United States: The hurt could last a lifetime*. McKinsey & Company. <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/covid-19-and-student-learning-in-the-united-states-the-hurt-could-last-a-lifetime#>
- Elgart, M., (2021) Learning upended: How Americans experienced the shift to remote instruction. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 102 (5), 48-51.



- Hall, J., (2020). Responding to COVID-19 – Reflections on teaching, from reaction to reinvention. *International Information and Library*, 52 (4), 311-317, <http://doi.org/10.1080/10572317.2020.1834245>
- Hopkins, G., (2017, July 20). *What makes effective teaching teams tick?* Education World from [https://www.educationworld.com/a\\_admin/admin/admin408\\_a.shtml](https://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin408_a.shtml)
- Leenders, H., de Jong, J., & Monfrance, M., (2019). Building strong parent-teacher relationships in primary education: The challenge of two-way communication, *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 49 (4), 519-533, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764X.2019.1566442>
- Lipsky, E., Dvorin Friedman, I., & Harkema, R. (2017) Am I wearing the right hat? Navigating professional relationships between parent – Teachers and their colleagues. *School Community Journal*, 27 (1). <http://www.schoolcommunitynetworks.org/SCJ.aspx>
- Minkos, M.L., & Gelbar, N.W. (2021). Considerations for educators in supporting student learning in the midst of COVID-19. *Psychology in the Schools*, 58(2), 416-426. <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.22454>
- Schwartz, S., (2020, August 5). Classroom management must change. Here's what teaching looks like under COVID-19. *Education Week*. <https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/classroom-routines-must-change-heres-what-teaching-looks-like-under-covid-19/2020/08>

## **5 Steps to Working with Your School Board**

According to this article from Great Schools, it may be time to go to a school board meeting. The article discusses how to work with your local school board — the people who can make or break your child's education.

This is the secret place where parents can make the biggest difference in their child's education. It's far beyond the principal's office and the school cafeteria where the monthly PTA meeting is held. It's where the real decisions about your child's education take place: **The school board.**

The article gives 5 reasons parents should work with their school board, and divides the discussion into 5 sections:

1. Understand why school boards matter
2. Get educated about your school board
3. Go to a school board meeting
4. Take your issue to the school board
5. Vote in local school board elections

Access the article at:

<https://www.greatschools.org/gk/articles/taking-it-to-the-school-board/>

## **Family Engagement and Children with Disabilities: A Resource Guide for Educators and Parents**

This resource guide has been compiled to help parents and special educators establish a comfortable and effective partnership in service of promoting successful outcomes for children with disabilities. Highlighted are research reports, journal articles, examples of best practices, and tools that suggest methods for developing productive collaborations so that educators and families can, together, ensure better services for children in their care.

Access the resource guide at

<http://www.hfrp.org/family-involvement/publications-resources/family-engagement-and-children-with-disabilities-a-resource-guide-for-educators-and-parents>

## **Book Review: The New One Minute Manager**

**Jessica Garcia**

Ken Blanchard is not only an American author, but he is also a motivational speaker and business consultant. Spencer Johnson was an American physician and author. These two authors worked together to write the One Minute Manager series of books. Although they wrote several of the books on their own, they worked together to write the New One Minute Manager which was published in 2015. Two years later in 2017 author Spencer Johnson lost his battle to cancer. Ken Blanchard continues to write books.

The New One Minute Manager was updated and republished in 2015, the original was published in 1982. The updated version was revamped to go with the modern times of today. This book was written as a guide for effective ways to manage a business with the constant changing trends and practices. This book was written as a fictional tale that brings you on a journey with a young gentleman trying to find the secrets to having exceptional management in business. It was written using an omniscient point of view, where the person telling you the story has full knowledge of each character in the story.

The story begins with the main character, a young gentleman, who is search of the best of the best business managers. He visits various business and speaks with their managers that fall into two categories that he has made: “results orientated” and “people orientated”. He notices that one group consists of leaders who are direct and tough, which leads their employees feeling less than enthused, uncomfortable, and eventually suppresses any productivity and creativity they may have had. While the other group may encourage, are friendly, and prioritize the health and welfare of their employees end up coming short and hurting at the expense of the business’s profits and success. As the young gentleman continues his journey he becomes discouraged that there may not be a way to have both a successful business and content employees. During his search, he meets a man that is only known as “the Manager”, who he discusses with his findings. “The Manager” invites him back to his business and where he sends the young

gentlemen to meet several of his employees in a succession of meetings “lessons”. In these meetings he will learn the three secrets to the New One Minute Management, a style that is implemented by management that will yield successful business results while still maintaining a high moral with employees.

### Main Themes

The story is separated into three practices of the New One Minute Management: 1. One Minute Goals; 2. One Minute Praise; 3. One Minute Re-Direct. He meets a different person for each of the secrets. The first person he meets “Teresa” touches base with him on her personal experience working with “the Manager” then goes into how she learned to set One Minute Goals, she shares with him what it entails, how it works, and the reason it is effective. Then he meets with “Paul”, who does the same as Teresa, shares his experience and then discusses about the second secret One Minute Praise. In between here he meets with another department to gather more information and lastly meets with “Jon” who also shares his experience and touches bases on the third secret One Minute Re-Directs. While he met with all the people who took notes down with each person regarding each of the three secrets.

At the beginning the gentleman was skeptical that having a successful business and having happy employees synchronously may not be feasible or realistic but after meeting with “the Manager” and his employees, asking questions and gathering information on each of the three secrets. At the end he meets with “the Manager” once again, the gentlemen says “I can see why you manage differently. But I still wonder why the Three Secrets are so effective.” He is curious as to why it all worked so well. “The Manager” gave him an analogy of a man, who is used to work with in another organization. He ran into this man at a bowling alley, he said the man rolled his ball then jumped up for joy, hollering and singing, “the Manager” asked him why do you think he reacted that way? The gentleman responded with “because he knocked down all the pins”. “The Manager” responded with “why do you think he and other people don’t have that same level of excitement at work?” (Chapter 11, pgs. 53-54) The gentleman sat and thought for a moment and responded with because they don’t know where the pins are – what they are aiming at. Right there, the gentleman understood. It is assumed by the managers that their employees know what is expected of them when in reality unless it is discussed they do not and therefore productivity of the business goes down and there is lack of communication with their employees, instead of

speaking with them, they are reprimanded and made to feel less of a person and confident in their skills.

### Key Quotes

An important quote from the book that makes this relatable and ties into theories for educational leadership and administration is “In modern times managers need to adapt to benefit both the employee and the profit of an organization. It’s a team effort, and everyone involved must contribute to produce a desirable result. A manager’s role is important, as their “presence” can influence the attitude and habits of everyone under them.” (Chapter 1, pg. 10) Even in the educational field, what we teach and how we teach is constantly being changed and personal development is constantly being done to improve our ways and help our students has much as possible.

“We used to be a top-down managed company, which worked in its time. But today that structure is too slow. It doesn’t inspire people and stifles innovation. Customers demand quicker service and better products, so we need everyone to contribute their talent. The brainpower isn’t only in the executive office – it can be found throughout the organization.” (Chapter 2, pg. 12) Again, this goes hand in hand with education. Our administration are our leaders, but they cannot do everything, it is a team effort and everyone in the field has something to contribute to make the educational experience for all involved to be the best it can be.

“The young man started to feel uncomfortable and wished he hadn’t asked the Manager to make a decision for him that he could’ve made himself.” (Chapter 2, pg. 16) This falls under the third secret of One Minute Re-Direct. The manager does re-direction in a way that his employees feel more confident in themselves rather than feeling insecure in their position. It is done in a way that the manager is not making decisions for them instead he guides them to make decisions that best suits them. With education it is hard to be told that you are not teaching in an effective way, if re-direct in the way this book explains, I think educators would be more open to having walk throughs and sit with administration and others to see how they can improve.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

Ken Blanchard and Spencer Johnson manage to write on the capability to turn a workplace of low morale and productivity into a more productive and a place where employees are content. They stress three major practices in which managers and employees can collaborate in order to have a successful business and employees who feel confident and a part of that success.

The strength in the specific themes these authors write about comes from the secrets/practices that allows all involved to set their own goals and initiative to follow through and get redirection in a way the uplifts them rather than brings them down and does not stifle their innovation creates an atmosphere for great moral and productivity. It is an easy read that can provides good advice on how to improve your management skills and leadership.

The weakness of this book is that it does not relate directly to education, while it is easy to see these three practices can to intersect, there is room for interpretation whether we can directly link it to education. Also, while it was engaging to read it in a fictional third-party omniscient point of view it would be nice to have had real accounts of real business that have implemented these methods in the book somewhere.

### Comparison to Fuller

The New One Minute Manager focuses on how managers can better themselves for the better interaction and productivity of their employees and business, Fullan's text is similar in some ways, as it speaks on teambuilding and how school leaders and administration should work alongside their teachers and staff. Fullan is simple to understand, how easy it is to put a plan together and implement it similar to The New One Minute Manager. The book has three simple practices to follow and implement. Combining Fullan and the book's methods in an educational administration, it can be an effective template for all to follow to assure the school system is running to its full potential in all areas including all of the staff engaged and bringing their talents to the table to play a part in the success of the students.

## References

- Blanchard, K., & M.D., J. S. (2015). *The New One Minute Manager* (1st ed.). William Morrow.
- Fullan, M. (2009). *The challenge of change: start school improvement now!* Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.



## Book Review: Impactful Instructional Leadership & Framework for Success

Natalia M. Hayter

School Principal and award-winning author Jack Hunter shares his vision, strategies, and experiences on what it means to be an impactful instructional leader in his guide for educators and administrators. His book details a step-by-step structured framework for establishing effective leadership, with opportunities for readers to interact directly and purposefully with the content. Hunter encourages readers to evaluate their own vision, consider evidence-based practices, establish protocol to review data, and engage in shared leadership for school improvement. This is accomplished using pre-assessment questions, checklists, fill-in-the blank questions, rating scales, evaluation of conceptual data, and reflecting on results. Jack Hunter offers a relevant, meaningful, and evidence-based framework for educators and administrators as they focus on the positive change movement. His theories utilize practical and learning-focused protocol to influence successful outcomes for impactful leadership.

### Main Themes

*Impactful Instructional Leadership* is structured as a step-by-step approach, outlining guiding principles in a strategic and comprehensive framework for leadership. While Hunter recounts specifics related to his experience as a school principal, this book focuses more on a how-to approach using evidence-based research to drive the framework.

What separates Hunter's ideologies from other books that analyze leadership, is that his conceptual framework focuses on vision, purpose and beliefs, shared leadership, collaboration, and self-reflection as it relates to learning and instruction. It is stressed that starting with a "why statement" is the first step toward impactful leadership, and encouraging the development of all members of the organization to also establish their *why statement* to build the foundation for meaningful leadership. Jack Hunter mentored many leaders, and in the process, highlighted the

significance of setting goals, managing curriculum, monitoring and planning, allocating resources, and evaluating educators and staff to guide the whole organization toward growth and improvement. The focus should always be on student learning, and the vision should tie into one's contributions to the lives of others. As stated by Hunter (p. 184) "instructional leaders must realize that the goal is not to change people; but to move thinking toward emulating the vision or *why* of the organization." Hunter urges that *why* statements should be actionable, easy or clearly understood by others, drive change, and use affirmative language. This ideology, considering the *why* as purpose and beliefs, the *how* as the process and actions, and the *what* as results and outcomes, mark the focal point of instructional leadership as defined in his book.

Hunter encourages leaders to avoid spending too much time focusing on the minor details, and states that "activity is not accomplishment" (p. 564). Leadership should be about creating a meaningful vision, setting directions and goals, empowering members and motivating them to follow the vision, and providing the resources necessary to carry out the vision using evidence-based strategies. Hunter channels author Michael Fullan as he stated "change really isn't as hard as we thought if we capture people's interest and give them enjoyable, worthwhile experiences" (p. 329). Getting all stakeholders involved, inspired, and committed is critical for effective change and leadership to ensue.

Furthermore, Hunter stresses that leadership follows the interconnected framework of decision-making, growth, time management, reflection, and collaboration. Reflection being particularly important, and defined as the process of understanding what happens between learning and thinking, and the opportunity to improve upon self-awareness. This critical characteristic is targeted as essential for leadership to be meaningful, relevant, and focused on positive change. Another characteristic that Hunter develops for impactful leadership is the importance of self-assessment to overcome personal barriers. Hunter recounts the experiences of Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps, who as a child struggled in school and was diagnosed with ADHD. He reveals that Phelps was able to overcome his barriers once he connected with swimming, and was able to assess and evaluate himself to work on areas of weaknesses and improve areas of strength. The importance of effective leaders to understand the process of self-reflection is key to making an impact.

Another belief that Hunter exposed is the component of communication as it influences leadership. He states that communication is not all verbal, and according to the American Management Association Training on Communication, the impact breaks down to 7% spoken words, 38% vocal tone, and 55% body language (p. 482). In addition to effective communication, time management, becoming a mistake-friendly leader, establishing ways to thoughtfully disagree with others and develop conflict resolution skills, and collaboration/shared leadership are among the critical and most influential components of effective instructional leadership in which Hunter outlined in his guide.

Furthermore, a concept that resonated throughout his book is shared leadership as a substantial aspect of instructional leadership. Hunter describes shared leadership as a comprehensive and revolving relationship between decision making, collaboration, culture, and capacity building abilities. Hunter expresses that leadership should include the “sharing of decisions that affect teacher work conditions, culture of the school, community engagements, and professional learning for staff while also encompassing the shared distribution of leadership” (p. 652). Individuals have a natural need to be part of the group as valued, trusted, and empowered members of the organization, and effective leaders enable this innate desire to become reality. This design signifies his strong viewpoints on collaboration as imperative in the shared leadership process, as it impacts the organization as a whole.

Hunter expresses the significance that impactful leadership has on special education. In particular, the effectiveness of data chats and meetings to discuss current research and strategies to focus on areas of weakness and strengths. It is stated by Hunter that “numerous students with disabilities who excel in areas such as computer science and project-based learning...a student’s label should not drive his/her instruction” (p. 1017), emphasizing his viewpoint that students with disabilities should be a primary focus when analyzing school growth and progress. Controversially, the idea that inequity drives action adds to the framework that considers intervention, acceleration, and remediation to occur simultaneously, as created by Hunter’s *Mastery Process* which includes teaching content, reteaching content, level 1 assessments, and intervention/extension. The importance of considering special education as a priority is evident in Hunter’s practice and principles for effective instructional leadership.

#### Key Quotes

*“Mistakes are like those little puzzles that, when you solve them, they give you a gem.”* (Michael Jordan, p. 575) - This quote expresses Hunter’s ideology that mistakes should not bring down the organization, but rather inspire active, and in context learning. It is a necessary component to grow and establish effective, mistake-friendly leadership.

*“Sharing of decisions that affect teacher work conditions, culture of the school, community engagements, and professional learning for staff while also encompassing the shared distribution of leadership.”* (P. 652). - Hunter summarizes his views on the importance of shared leadership and shared decision-making as it impacts the school culture as a whole, and the impact it has on stakeholders.

*“It’s not how we behave during exceptional days, it’s how we behave every day that shows our character.”* - (Drew Dudley, p. 647). - Leadership speaker and author Drew Dudley’s influence on Hunter’s pedagogy demonstrates the significance of moral purpose and vision, and the role that personal, intentional behavior has on effective leadership abilities.

*“Instructional leadership is the catalyst for school transformation.”* (P. 805). - Hunter relays numerous examples of how instructional leadership sets the tone for how schools progress, the adopted mindset of members within the organization, and the overall impact it has on the community at large. Substantial, meaningful change is the result of positive, impactful leadership.

*“Evidence based practices unequivocally are the only processes that will lead to immense student achievement.”* (P. 824) -Hunter explains the utmost importance of research-based decision making as it influences student learning and a learning-focused culture. He stresses that there is no replacement for effective instruction using evidence-based practices, and highlights the importance of this ideology being explained and understood by members in the educational community.

### Strengths and Weaknesses

One of the strengths Hunter explores is the impact of the decision-making process as it relates to learning and growth. A key point he discusses is evidence-based practices and data collection. In particular, the importance of triangulation of data as it corresponds to student performance.

Using the term *data warrior*, Hunter examines how summative, formative, state, and norm-referenced data along with classroom and teacher observations in the form of walk-throughs using research-driven practices and protocols should be on the forefront of all administrative leadership. It is noted that not all data is good data, and stresses the importance of fidelity to drive decision-making and outcomes. Establishing a decision-making, evidence-based protocol, Hunter advises that strong leadership embody a knowledge-building base, focus on vetting ideas, maintaining fidelity, overseeing new initiatives, planning implementation, and lastly reflecting on results. Similar frameworks published, including work by educational researchers Robert Marzano and John Hattie, share the importance of leadership to maintain an active and engaged role in the development and growth of educators and student learning by spending substantial time assisting, reviewing, collaborating, providing feedback, and knowledge sharing with educators who are implementing the initiatives.

While Hunter's methodology is grounded in evidence, where it lacks is how to implement the student-centered learning as identified across the text. Hunter's thorough examination of data analysis and student achievement utilizing systematic processes for learning are not explored in terms of students with varying exceptionalities and the impact on overall growth due to environmental factors unidentified. There are some key points targeted toward special education, but it would be beneficial to explore special education in depth as it impacts instructional leadership outcomes.

#### Comparison to Fullan's *Leading in a Culture of Change*

Fullan and Hunter share many methodologies and themes, including the importance of knowledge-sharing and collaboration as it pertains to moral purpose. Hunter channels Fullan as he describes leadership in terms of setting a direction, inspiring people to achieve a shared vision and goal, and driving progress toward a future that positively impacts the community. Fullan recounts Fontaine's *Hare and Tortoise* fable to illustrate how to lead in a culture of change, whereas Hunter analyses and makes reference to Dr. Seuss's *Yertle the Turtle* story to emphasize the impact of being humble and understanding leadership's role to lead the people. While the conceptual ideas of both stories are different, the impact that the references had on both authors speak volumes on how each views and handles obstacles, struggles, and setbacks. It is evident

by Hunter's framework that his ideologies mirror many of Fullan's theories on the value of effective leadership.

Hunter refers to an organization's *why statement*, or vision as the catalyst to start the change process. Similarly, Fullan describes moral purpose, in terms of both the ends and means of making a difference. Both approaches share a similar vision, one that inspires to deepen the understanding of what it truly means to be a leader and the impact it has on an organization. Furthermore, both Fullan and Hunter share similar models of the value of collaboration as a pathway to transformational change.

### References

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a Culture of Change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Hunter, J. (2020). *Impactful, Instructional Leadership & Framework for Success*. JHVG Publishing.

## **Book Review: The Making of a Manager: What to do When Everyone Looks at you**

**Austyn Johnson**

Julie Zhou was 25 working for a startup company when she became a manager. Her idea of what management consisted of was meetings and promotions. Julie said yes to the promotion which was the beginning of the adventure. Just the idea of I get along with everyone, but what else was she missing to understand that management was more than that. Julie wondered what else it would take for her to be a manager. During her first meeting after her promotion with one of her old coworkers she could sense that everyone knew she had no idea what she was doing. Julie Zhou grew up in the dense streets of Shanghai and then the suburbs of Huston. She didn't understand the significance of certain aspects of the American culture of shows and movies. She began understanding what website designing was and learned what an HTML was. The new beginning of understanding what an HTML was and had allowed her and her friend to combine their hobbies of drawing and making websites to show their work.

When Julie Zhou arrived to Stanford, she knew exactly what she wanted to study, Computer Science. Taking classes on the different algorithms and databases in hopes to be able to work for Microsoft or even google.

*The Making of a Manager: What to do When Everyone looks at you* is a guide packed with examples as well as a wide variety of insights that that can describe and see the difference of a great manager from a average manager, to building reports and when you don't have answers where you can look to find those hard answers.

### **Main Themes**

*The Making of a Manager: What to do When Everyone looks at you* covers a wide variety of themes. These themes follow along the aspects of "What is Management?" to Leading a Growing Team.

What is a manager? Is the first question Julie Zhou asked. When all know what good and bad managers look like but what is management all about? He first understands of what a manager was to have meetings with the reports and help them solve their problems, share what is or is not working, or who should be promoted or who should be fired. However, after 3 years of being a manager he answers has changed. She believes that a manager's job is to build a team that works well with each other, can support members to reach their own goals, as well as be able to get work done efficiently. Julie Zhou stated that "the management aspect has nothing to do with employment status and everything to do with the fact *that you are no longer trying to get something done by yourself.*" Zhuo, Julie. *The Making of a Manager* (pg. 18) Management is being able to give up some of the control, you don't make every decision anymore. Julie also identified "the crux of management is the belief that a team of people can achieve more than a single person going at it alone." Zhuo, Julie. *The Making of a Manager* (pg. 18) The idea that being a manager is not just creating rules, interview staff and fixing problems its ideally about working together in order to produce and create important content.

The first 3 months of being a manager are key to identifying what kind of manager you want to be. Julie Zhou likes to ask her new managers that join her team "What turned out to be more challenging than you expected, and what was easier than you expected?" Zhuo, Julie. *The Making of a Manager* (p. 39). It was identified that there are 4 ways that you can become a manager. These 4 are apprentice, pioneer, new boss, or successor. Ideally depending on the path that they come in can determine how the first 3 months will go of their management journey. Ideally the first 3 months can be a tough transition, however, at the end you start to get a routine and start adapting to the new role of being a manager.

When being a manager you are in charge of a team, the size of the team can vary and can always be changing. The goal is to be able to come together and solve, communicate and critique each other to help continue the design process. "The goal is to always get better outcomes from a group of people working together through influencing purpose, people, and process." Zhuo, Julie. *The Making of a Manager* (p. 58). A key to have a successful and positive working team is to trust. Friendships, marriages, partnerships and even the manager relationship is no different than the others. Also being a manager is also being human and understanding how others may feel in certain situations. Not only should managers understand that some situations may be



tricky, they are also working to allow people to find and use their personal strengths to grow and succeed.

Managers should also be willing to give feedback, however they should be finding ways to make that feedback something the team member can learn from. Great feedback is something that can be remembered, or something that can be strong enough to change your behavior. Julie Zhou says that “There’s a whole swath of things beyond “suggestions for improvement” that can inspire someone to take positive action. For one, feedback doesn’t have to be critical. Praise is often more motivating than criticism. And for another, you don’t always have to start with a problem.” Zhuo, Julie. *The Making of a Manager* (p. 84).

In order to lead a growing team means finding new ways to be able to add new knowledge to the team that can assist with creating new programs or even setting new goals. As teams grow Julies Zhou noted that sometime after new team members have been introduced some of the old ways that the team has been working may not fit into the team as it did before. Julie Zhou stated that “Your frontline view of how a team works starts to evolve into a macro view. Setting a vision, hiring leaders, delegating responsibility, and managing communication become the key skills needed to bridge the gap.” Zhuo, Julie. *The Making of a Manager* (p. 218).

When reading Fullerton’s text, you can see how the way leadership and managers can be identified differently. Fullerton mentioned that companies may tend to die when they are more focused on the economically aspect and not on the team and their well-being. Zhou’s text also stated that we should want to focus on the team’s well-being as well as how we can allow them to show their strengths and learn from some critiques and feedback. Fullerton also stated, “Principals with low scores on leadership as perceived by teachers generally are seen as managers who provide little support or direction for teaching and learning in the school.” (Fullan, M. 2001). I can see how this statement can be supported by Zhou’s text as it stated what a good manager and bad manager can look like.

## References

Zhou, J. (2019). *The Making of a Manager: What to do When Everyone Looks to You*. Penguin Random House USA.

Fullan, M. (2001). *Leading in a culture of change*. Jossey-Bass.

## **Acknowledgements**

Portions of this or previous month's ***NASET's Special Educator e-Journal*** were excerpted from:

- Center for Parent Information and Resources
- Committee on Education and the Workforce
- FirstGov.gov-The Official U.S. Government Web Portal
- Journal of the American Academy of Special Education Professionals (JAASEP)
- National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability for Youth
- National Institute of Health
- National Organization on Disability
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
- U.S. Department of Education
- U.S. Department of Education-The Achiever
- U.S. Department of Education-The Education Innovator
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
- U.S. Department of Labor
- U.S. Food and Drug Administration
- U.S. Office of Special Education

The **National Association of Special Education Teachers** (NASET) thanks all of the above for the information provided for this or prior editions of the Special Educator e-Journal

---

**Download a PDF or XPS Version of This e-Journal**

To Download a PDF file for this issue of the NASET Special Educator e-Journal- **CLICK  
HERE**

To Download a XPS file for this issue of the NASET Special Educator e-Journal - **CLICK  
HERE**