

SPOTLIGHT



—AP Photo/Nam Y. Huh

Sarah Marton, a paraprofessional at Niles Township District for Special Education in Illinois, talks with her 8th grade son Cooper Marton, as he does school work at his computer at home in Chicago. Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker's executive order closes all kindergarten through 12th grade schools—public and private—"for educational purposes" from March 17 through March 30.

CORONAVIRUS AND SCHOOLS

EDITOR'S NOTE

The coronavirus is posing a significant threat to the American education system. In this Spotlight, learn about how educators are implementing remote learning, how school closures are affecting special education, and how educators are addressing critical issues in education due to COVID-19.

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Published on March 18, 2020, in Education Week's Teaching Now Blog

Teachers Scramble to Make Remote Learning Work: 'It's Very Stressful'

By Sarah Schwartz

Now that most states have closed schools in response to the coronavirus, teachers have found themselves planning for remote learning for the foreseeable future, often with a few days—or a few hours—notice.

But what this looks like is different from district to district, and even classroom to classroom. Some teachers have put together physical or virtual packets that they hope will bridge the gap for the few weeks their districts are shut down. Others have been asked to move their entire classroom online, conducting instruction live.

Still, many are facing the same questions: How do I make sure that students without internet access get the same resources as students with connectivity at home? Can we create a classroom community virtually? And what do I do when the technology fails?

And now, teachers are facing another hurdle: The potential that schools may stay closed longer than originally planned, possibly through the end of the year. On Tuesday, Kansas Gov. Laura Kelly announced that schools would shut down through the 2019-20 year. That same day, California Gov. Gavin Newsom said in a news conference that the schools in his state would most likely stay closed for the rest of the academic year as well (the governor has not shut down schools statewide).

Anji Williams, a secondary English teacher in the Los Angeles Unified School District, has already thought about the possibility of having to design more remote assignments.

"If you think you're going to send kids home with a packet, and that's going to be a substitute for being in a classroom for two weeks, it isn't," she said. Still, she said it was the best option when teachers started planning for a potential shut down earlier last week.

She knows, from a survey that the school sent out before the closures, that most of her students have internet access. But a lot of them rely on their phone to



—AP Photo/Ross D. Franklin

connect and have limited data. "They're not going to have the same options," she said.

When the school system announced last Friday that the district was closing, teachers had prepared a set of eight different assignments for each course, Williams said. She also took students to her class library and her school library, so they could stock up on books before they left.

"They've built a level of fluency; they're enjoying their reading a little more," she said. "That's really hard, cutting that off."

Her students have access to her through the school's learning management system. On Tuesday night, she got her first message, from a student who was struggling with the work.

Not knowing how often kids will reach out for help, or how much they'll be able to continue doing schoolwork at all, "that's really scary," Williams said. And she worries about equity. "My students who achieve at a higher academic level are going to benefit more from this. And my students who are struggling are going to lose more time," she said.

Williams' plans are for mostly asynchronous learning. But teachers in other districts have been asked to hold real-time classes, which they say come with

Tony Berastegui, 12, left, and his sister Giselle, 9, do their school work at home on the dining room table as the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic forced schools to close Monday, March 16, 2020, in Laveen, Ariz.

another set of challenges.

"Teachers are getting up every day, trying to figure out how to teach on platforms they haven't been taught how to use, in 24 hours time," said Tyneisha Hamilton, a 5th grade teacher in Henry County schools in Georgia. Her district is using Google tools for remote lessons, she said.

On Monday, the district's first day of remote learning, Hamilton logged onto Google Meet for her first class. About half of her students had also joined, but she couldn't see their faces. They had been blocked for privacy reasons. Kids could only reply through the chat.

"As an educator, if you planned an activity and can't see their faces, how effective is that lesson?" Hamilton said.

Everyone at the district has been supportive and responsive, especially in fixing technical problems, like helping students and teachers log on, she said. Still, Hamilton had been expecting a different experience. She's taught online before, tu-

toring students one-on-one through VIP-Kid, a Beijing-based company that matches English teachers with kids in China for virtual lessons.

That platform allows teachers and students to see each other, Hamilton said. “How much am I really teaching you, if I can’t see you model?” she asked.

‘I Can’t Just Pause My Curriculum’

For other teachers, the process has gone more smoothly.

Michael Quist, a high school chemistry and Spanish teacher in Eminence, Ky., put together a week-long packet when he found out on Thursday that his district wouldn’t be coming back on Monday. He also uploaded everything onto Google Classroom.

All assignments are due on Friday—students can progress at their own pace, and then upload their work to the site or take a picture of the completed hard copy. Quist is available by email for questions.

So far, things are going pretty well. “I’ve been surprised about how many are actually taking it really seriously,” he said. But Quist acknowledges that he may have a head start when it comes to this kind of instruction.

For years, he’s taught with a mastery-based approach: Students have a lot of practice working on different projects at different paces, and Quist has experience managing that kind of schedule.

Quist’s school system also supports students in the rural community who

have spotty internet access—they can dispatch WiFi-equipped school buses to key locations in the district, he said. The high school is distributing paper assignments to students without devices or connectivity throughout the week.

“At the drop of a hat, we were able to go to non-traditional instruction,” Quist said.

His students are doing remote learning this week, and then will be on spring break for the two weeks following. But after that, the future is less clear. While the Eminence Independent District isn’t currently planning to stay closed after spring break, leaders elsewhere in the country have raised the possibility that school may be out for the rest of the year. That’s already a reality in Kansas, where the governor announced Tuesday that all schools in the state would be closed through the end of the 2019-20 school year.

Kaitlyn Barker worries about what longer closures would mean for her students. Barker, a 10th grade English/language arts teacher at Avon Community School Corporation in central Indiana, is on her second week of remote teaching. Schools closed earlier this month after a student in the district tested positive for COVID-19.

Barker is comfortable with her district’s e-learning platform, as she’s used it before on snow days and for other short, unexpected closings. But on those days, she’d usually do some sort of supplemental activity, like show a short PowerPoint and give a quick quiz, or have students practice for the state standardized tests they take in 10th grade.

“This, over an extended period of time, is a bit more challenging,” Barker said. “I can’t just pause my curriculum and do something different for a day.”

Right now, she’s working with one class on essay writing. She’s having students write it in chunks and turn them in each day. She’s offered video conferencing to talk about her feedback, but so far, no one has taken her up on it.

For another class, she’s trying Zoom meetings to talk about the book they’re reading. “When you don’t have that personal connection, it’s really hard to have those class discussions that are so important for English, and other subjects as well,” Barker said.

She’s in communication with her district’s special education department about how to make sure students get their accommodations online, and she’s given extra time to those who would also be getting it in the classroom. She’s also been contacting parents and messaging students to make sure they know about the assignments, as only about 50 to 75 percent of her students were turning in work when the district first moved to remote learning, she said.

The district has been very supportive, Barker said, offering resources and help. Still, she said, “it’s a lot to keep up with, to be honest.”

Teaching from home might seem fun or relaxing, but it’s not, Barker said. “Oh, you get to stay at home and stay in your pajamas and do work on your computer? But it’s actually very stressful.” ■

Published on March 19, 2020, in Education Week

How Will Schools Provide Special Education During the Coronavirus Crisis?

By Corey Mitchell

With a pandemic pressing tens of thousands of the nation’s school districts into extended closures, special education administrators across the nation are wrestling with a weighty dilemma: how to provide services to students with disabilities.

Federal law mandates that individuals with disabilities have an equal opportu-

nity to participate in everything schools provide—including online learning.

But a mix of factors—lack of clarity in state laws, unclear guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, and a reluctance to run afoul of federal law—has left some school districts struggling to get their online learning programs off the ground.

Uncertainty has handcuffed some districts, forcing them to shut down their online learning operations, at least temporarily.

The Northshore School District in suburban Seattle—a hotspot in the national coronavirus outbreak—managed to roll out its districtwide distance learning plan for 25,000-plus students ahead of a mandatory five-week statewide shutdown.

In the weeks since campuses closed there, staff got thousands of tablets and hundreds of internet hotspots into the hands of students—only to suspend operations because school leaders fear they

Changing the Narrative of Mathematics at Home

Sara Delano Moore, Ph.D.

Director of Professional Learning and Mathematics Advisory Board Chair at ORIGO Education

Peter Stowasser

Lead Writer and Mathematics Advisory Board Member at ORIGO Education

"We have to flatten the curve." How many times have we heard that in the past few weeks? It is one of the reasons why we needed to pay attention when we learned about exponential growth in algebra class. For many of us, the lessons were long ago and we're now having a quick refresher course.

We live in a world where mathematics is important, for public health, for family budgeting, for making good decisions in many ways. We also live in a world where many believe mathematics is difficult, or that only some of us are good at math and that it is okay to say, "I don't do math." Our mission at ORIGO Education is to change those beliefs and lay a foundation for mathematics to be meaningful, enjoyable, and accessible for all.

ORIGO Education is not alone in the mission. The National Council for Teaching Mathematics' *Catalyzing Change* initiative also focuses on broadening the purpose of school mathematics, dismantling obstacles faced when learning mathematics, implementing equitable instructional practices, and organizing mathematics to provide a strong foundation of deep mathematical understanding for each and every child. (NCTM, 2020)

Teachers, too, are working hard to change the narrative of mathematics from a painful time of memorization and worksheets to an enjoyable sensemaking and problem-solving experience. As school moves home, we also want to see these conversations being shared at home. Doing mathematics at home should not be the land of "death by worksheet" and endless skill practice.



Exponential Growth:

In the wheat and chessboard fable, one grain is placed on the first square, then doubled for the second square and so on. The request is made by the inventor of the game, who hoodwinks the king.

Students should be learning by explaining their thinking. Yes, there is some skill practice, but much of that can be in the form of games and applications, not just constantly completing worksheets.

Today, parents join the fight. But this is not without challenge or sacrifice. Families are finding a new normal where everyone is together all the time, which can be overwhelming. Learning with your child should never become a burden. Our undertaking is to open the doors to teachable moments, so adults and children enjoy learning mathematics together.

At ORIGO Education, we think hard about balancing these competing demands.

Reference: National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2020). *Catalyzing Change in Early Childhood and Elementary Mathematics: Initiating Critical Conversations*. (Huinker, D., Editor) Reston, VA: Author

Changing the Narrative of Mathematics at Home (continued)

If you're a parent,

we encourage you to talk with your child about mathematics. Open their eyes to the everyday applications of mathematics by including them in the day to day decisions you make. Ask an older child to do the math of the grocery budget or scaling a recipe. Ask a younger child to help match socks by color or count the eggs in the carton.

If you're a teacher,

we encourage you to consider resources that can be implemented at home, by caregivers, and understand that parents may be uncomfortable with the math. You might need to provide background or guidance on how to introduce a concept or strategy, for example, the count-on strategy. The assignments and resources you share could be an opportunity to change adult perceptions of mathematics, while helping children learn. Be realistic in your expectations and look for opportunities to integrate mathematics with other subjects.

If you're an administrator,

we encourage you to support your school community, both teachers and families, in finding opportunities to experience mathematics as meaningful and enjoyable.

We have put together a series of open access resources designed to encourage mathematics learning at home, during the current school closure, and for the long term when schools do reopen. Written for parents and caregivers in grades Pre-K–6, teachers can share **ORIGO At Home** with their school community.



ORIGO at Home

Pre-K to Grade 6 weekly math plans and activities

Welcome to **ORIGO At Home**, a space to provide guidance and instruction for continuing math learning at home. The weekly plans feature:

- activities for each day
- digitally accessible or downloadable resources
- format for delivery by a caregiver or remote teacher

These resources complement the mathematical concepts and skills your students are learning at their grade level.

Student Resources also available in Spanish!



Try it today. Free, no login required! origoeducation.com/math-at-home

could be in violation of state and federal mandates for providing equitable services.

In a video message released Tuesday, Kenneth Marcus, the education department's assistant secretary for civil rights, said: "Online learning is a powerful tool for educational institutions as long as it is accessible for everyone. Services, programs, and activities online must be accessible to persons, including people with disabilities, unless equally effective alternate access is provided."

Districts face the potential loss of federal funding if they fail to provide accommodations for students with disabilities. They also face the risk of complaints, and potential legal action, from parents and disability rights advocates for running afoul of federal civil rights laws.

"The first things [schools] are thinking of is 'Are we going to get ourselves in trouble?'" said Phyllis Wolfram, the executive director of the Council of Administrators of Special Education.

But the situation is a Catch-22: Districts could face the same issues if they refuse to do anything at all.

"We've paused for a moment," said Northshore schools Superintendent Michelle Reid. "We have to learn to navigate the rules and regulations that were written for a time we're not in any longer. There is no written guidance that frees us from penalties."

The Council of Chief State Schools Officers and other organizations have called on the department to clarify how districts should proceed, but for now, many district and state leaders are trying to make sense of the current guidance.

"A lot of people are looking for very specific directions," said Erin Maguire, who oversees special education services for the Essex Westford, Vt., schools. "There's confusion and that's probably to be expected given the crisis we're in."

Distance learning in Maguire's district is set to begin Monday.

That confusion has laid bare a troubling opportunity gap: Many schools that tout 21st century learning opportunities struggle to provide those opportunities for all students.

Online learning is "a fairly complex arena for all K-12; for students with disabilities there are additional layers," said Sean Smith, a professor of special education at the University of Kansas, who served as one of the principal investigators for the Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities. "It's a rude awakening for our teachers and education leaders."



We've paused for a moment. We have to learn to navigate the rules and regulations that were written for a time we're not in any longer. There is no written guidance that frees us from penalties."

MICHELLE REID

SUPERINTENDENT, NORTHSORE SCHOOLS

Lack of Guidance Not New

The federal education department has known for years that states have struggled to develop remote learning policies for students with disabilities.

A 2016 report from the now-shuttered Center on Online Learning and Students with Disabilities, a federally funded research collaborative, found that 38 states lacked clear guidance or policies on who should provide special education services in an online school setting.

The situation has not improved much in the years since, said John Eisenberg, the executive director of the National Association of State Directors of Special Education.

The current guidance is "probably not getting down to the level of instruction and the challenges that parents, teachers, and students face," said Smith, the University of Kansas professor.

The new reality has left some districts scrambling to find resources and train

staff before they can even begin efforts to teach students online—and those are just the states that have action plans.

"This crisis has triggered a re-examination of options. Some places think [online learning] is too hard to do for students with disabilities," Eisenberg said. "But that's not the message we want to send to the country."

The Philadelphia school district, which educates more than 200,000 students, will not offer remote instruction during its two-week coronavirus shutdown, because many students lack equal access to technology.

"That's a panic response," said Denise Marshall, the executive director of the Council of Parent Attorneys and Advocates, a disability-rights advocacy group. "We shouldn't give districts a pass. We need them to stand up and say what they need."

'Uncharted Waters'

The Council of Chief State School Officers has urged the federal education department to provide clarity on special education equity for students with disabilities in an online environment, CCSO Executive Director Carissa Moffat Miller said this week.

"The guidance that came out, there is some interpretation about that being fairly limiting and causing confusion," Moffat Miller said on a call with reporters Wednesday.

A spokeswoman from the U.S. Education Department said the agency expects to release additional guidance on issues such as special education in "coming days."

"Online learning is not an ideal experience," said Reid, the Northshore schools superintendent. "So let's extend grace to school districts as we work really hard to provide sound educational experiences for all of our students. We cannot allow perfection to be the enemy of any kind of progress."

Now that schools are closed for weeks in many parts of the country, states must also provide guidance to schools on a host of special education issues. Among them are how to comply with deadlines to determine student eligibility for special education services and with mandates governing Individualized Education Program hearings.

"We can't undo federal law," Wolfram said. "Schools are facing challenges they've never faced before and we're in very uncharted waters." ■



—Getty

COMMENTARY

Published on March 23, 2020 in Education Week's Finding Common Ground Blog

12 Critical Issues in Education Due to the Coronavirus

By Peter DeWitt

At the end of December, I posted a column focusing on 12 critical issues facing education in 2020. Although I stick by all of them, I clearly missed a very big critical crisis that we are now facing in 2020, and that is Covid-19.

If you told me that we would be seeing thousands of people around the world contracting a disease, the NBA suspending its season, March Madness canceled (although we are experiencing our own March Madness right now), Disney World and Disneyland closing, countries closing their borders to prevent the spread of the disease, and the U.S. president doing briefing sessions every single day to announce new precautions, I would have thought it was the trailer to a new Hollywood blockbuster.

I kept waiting for Will Smith to enter into the movie at any time. We now know that this is our reality, and not a movie at all.

For full disclosure, I go through a daily dose of feeling optimistic that we will all get through this and a few moments of sadness at the state of the world. So, because I clearly missed a critical issue on

my list from the end of 2019, I thought I would offer a list of critical issues that are developing because of the coronavirus.

Most times, writing is my way of working through an issue, and one of the feelings that I am consistently trying to come back to is that, through all of the devastation this has occurred around the world, we need to find moments of positivity.

12 Critical Issues

These education- and child-focused issues are not written in any particular order, although there are a few that are unlike anything we have ever seen. Every day we learn more, and that contributes to the list because so much of our world is living through the unknown, but we know that that will change soon and we will have much more information.

The most important issue in the world, and for humanity, is the health and safety of everyone. There have been thousands of deaths due to the coronavirus, which is devastating. The world has stopped, tried to come together, and we are all trying to take every precaution we can to be

healthy and safe. The list that follows is not meant to minimize the deaths, but rather open up a discussion about how this virus has impacted leaders, teachers, families and students where education is concerned.

The 12 critical issues we are seeing are:

One billion students out of school

- Perhaps out of all the issues, this is the one that is most critical. UNESCO reports “1,254,315,203 affected learners, 72.9 percent of total enrolled learners, and 124 countrywide closures.

We don't we have coronavirus toolkits

- Leaders, teachers, and staff had to scramble because they did not have coronavirus toolkits. The reality is that this is not something you learn about in your preservice teaching programs, nor do you learn about it in leadership school. Leaders learn how to work through most emergencies (i.e., flooding, school shootings, sudden death of a student or staff member, etc), but a virus that prevents students from going to school for months is not one of them. Corwin Press created a free resource kit for leaders in case they still need one. **Feed the children**

- According to US News and World Report, over 30 million students across the country receive free and reduced-price lunch. For those of us who work or have worked in schools, we know there are families that do not always fill out the paperwork, so that is why I put over 30 million students. When all is said and done, this will be one of the saddest issues that most people will learn during this crisis. I have had many friends and family members who said they had no idea that so many children go hungry. Thank you to the thousands of volunteers across the country who are working to get these students fed.

Parents as homeschool teachers

- My niece is a bartender at a popular restaurant chain that has closed down. She and her husband have three children who are really great kids, and as much as she loves them, she never considered homeschooling. Now she doesn't have a choice, along with millions of other parents and caregivers around the world. It's important that they remember that they are not expected to do all of the things that teachers do during the day. Many school districts are making this a time of review for students. Kudos to all of the parents and caregivers who are stepping up to the plate during this difficult time.

Forgetting: the Challenge of Teaching Mathematics

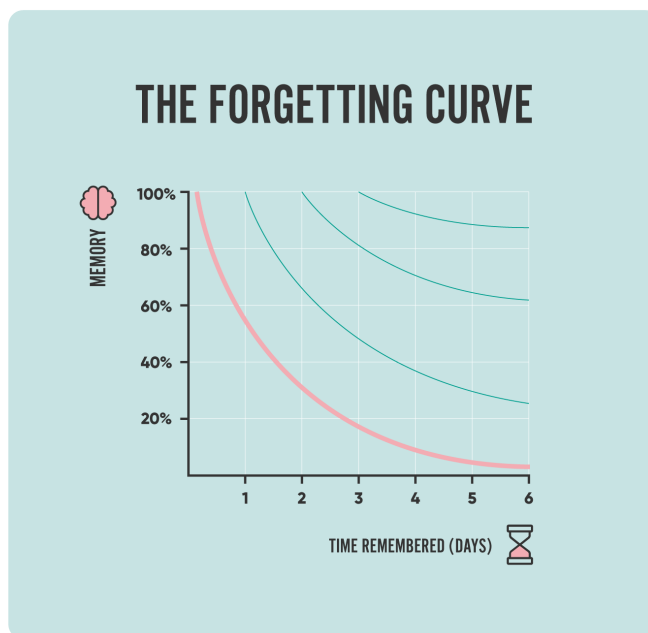
Calvin J. Irons BA, MA, Ph.D.

Mathematics and Mathematics Education at Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, Australia and Co-Founder of ORIGO Education

Mathematics is a discipline of interconnected knowledge that is built on prior learning. Students are being asked to recall concepts, skills and procedures in order to successfully learn new material. Learning new content is next to impossible if pre-requisites have been forgotten. This makes the study of forgetting crucial.

The initial, and still relevant, scientific studies involving forgetting were conducted by Hermann Ebbinghaus in 1886. He and psychologists since his initial work have researched methods to improve recall and use the diagram at the right to show how repeated visits to the content over a period of time, helps learners remember longer. It is counterproductive to teach content in large/long blocks. Teaching needs to revisit the content in a planned cycle. This type of instruction is called **spaced learning** and has been shown as one of the most important influencing factors for retention.

<https://examstudyexpert.com/ebbinghaus-forgetting-curve/>



Spaced learning is the one overarching approach, but it does not give specific teaching strategies to be used within activities. The following ideas should be incorporated in the spaced learning approach.

1 Use a variety of representations – real world, concrete, pictorial, words (oral or written), and symbols.

One of the greatest contributors to forgetting, is the over-use of abstract symbols. Students remember when the material is linked to real world situations, concrete objects, or pictorial images. For example, students remember the steps to divide when the process is linked to sharing. A real context also makes it possible to use concrete materials to act out the steps. In the example at the right, money could be used to work out the answer. In the classroom, teachers will often use manipulatives to act out the steps. By using and connecting multiple representations, students are more likely to remember the process.

Three people share \$465 they earned for washing cars. What does each person receive?

We will start with the hundreds. Each person will get one hundred.

$$\begin{array}{r} 1 \\ 3 \overline{)465} \end{array}$$

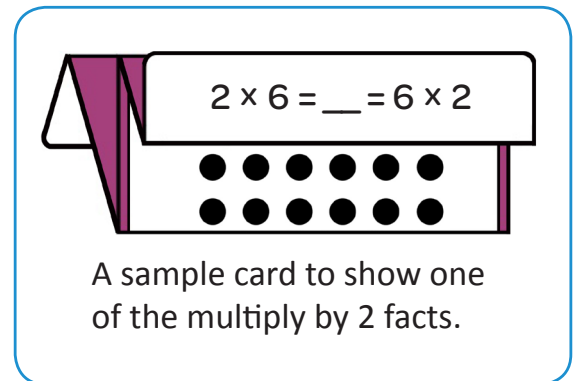
Forgetting: the Challenge of Teaching Mathematics

(continued)

2 Connect new learning to what is already known.

Often, new ideas in mathematics are presented in isolation. For example, multiplication facts are important and can be mastered if they are taught as a group with the same overall thinking strategies. Visual materials, like cards shown at the right, help students learn 'x 2' facts ($2 \times 3 = _$, $2 \times 4 = _$, $2 \times 5 = _$, $2 \times 6 = _$ and so on) using **doubling**. This helps students remember all the facts in the group of 'x 2' basic number facts.

Once students are confident with all of the 'x 2' facts, they use doubling again to learn the 'x 4' facts. In this way students see that the 'x 4' facts can be learned using the same strategic thinking.

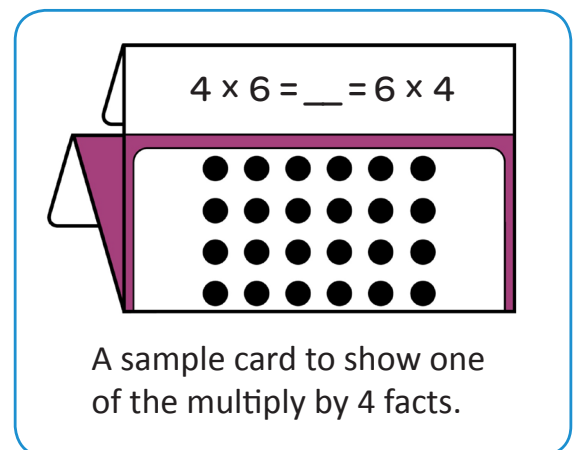


3 Encourage students to be more involved in the learning.

This means that students should be more active to verbalize and describe more of what they are learning. For example, they should explain what they see with these cards.

I think 'double' means to multiply by 2.

We can double and double again to multiply by 4.



Finally, re-visiting the content at strategic intervals means you can remember much more, for much longer. Do not be afraid to repeat discussions, with slight modifications. For example, address the same computation in a different context, with food rather than money.

In many current programs, symbols are introduced very early, perhaps because they are an efficient way of representing certain concepts. This can limit students' understanding of the concept and what these symbols represent because the symbols don't have meaning for the students yet. This greatly reduces their ability to make connections by applying their knowledge to new situations.

At *ORIGO* we introduce symbols gradually, to build a deeper understanding of the concepts underlying abstract symbols. In this way, students are better equipped with the confidence and ability to apply mathematics in new and unfamiliar situations. We encourage you to see it for yourself and give it a try with the resources we have created for at home learning. Built along a developmental scope and sequence, teachers can share these weekly plans with parents to reinforce grade level skills and standards and stop the curve of forgetting in mathematics. Visit origoeducation.com/math-at-home

Teacher appreciation - Over the last decade, I have felt like people do not appreciate teachers, or even, public education. The rhetoric around teaching has not been kind, but over the last two weeks, a lot of that has changed. People are now understanding that teaching is not easy, and they have seen their child's teachers step up and provide opportunities for learning through online resources, and all of this happened during a time when they had zero time to prepare. Can we please start appreciating our teachers and leaders a bit more?

High-stakes tests canceled - On March 15th, I wrote a blog asking if this is now the time to cancel high-stakes testing. At that time, most state education departments had not canceled high-stakes testing although students were at home learning through quickly developing online methods. Thankfully, all standardized-testing requirements have been waived.

Too many resources, too little time - This will be addressed again later in the list, but one of the issues taking place this week is that parents and caregivers were hit with too many resources. We know this is better than having none at all, which is what other parents and caregivers may be experiencing right now. To further exacerbate the issue, many organizations and consultants are offering resources to teachers and leaders. Most are in an effort to help, so we just need to do our best to choose one that is credible and we can use, and begin using it.

Seniors in high school lose out - Remember your senior year in high school or college? Our present seniors in high school and college are losing out on their last semester. There have been many on social media who say they need to get over it, but the reality is that this is a time when they would be experiencing closure with their friends and their studies and getting ready to transition into the next phase of their lives. Now that next phase seems so uncertain. This is when we long for the simple times, but their simple times will have one less experience to long for.

Inequities - The coronavirus pandemic is highlighting one thing that most of us knew already. Some schools have countless resources to share with families and caregivers, and other schools have very little at all. Some families have wireless, and one parent

or caregiver can stay home and work, while they try to homeschool at the same time, and others are being forced to stay home, and only have homework packets to provide to their children.

Habits need to change - We have finally found the time to say that students can play several times a day, and it is OK. Teachers have found that they need to home in on what is most important when it comes to educating students from afar, and that the control freak in all of us needs to take a break, because we do not have full control in this situation. Principals and school leaders are finding that there are many issues that can be solved in emails, and others that need more clarity.

Science - There has been a steady push for STEM over the last decade, and a global pandemic is one more way to get our students interested in science and technology. Whether it be helping more in isolation learn how to connect, or the next doctor who will create a vaccine, this is a time when people are greatly understanding the role of science.

Additionally, what we are learning is that the world is healing itself a bit these days. Carbon emissions are down for obvious reasons, and cities like Venice are seeing that the water is clearer than it has in decades, and there has been an increase in sea life showing up. Perhaps a bit of a silver lining in a cloud of doubt?

Social-emotional learning - One of the topics that I write about quite often is that of social-emotional learning, and it is the topic that gets the most pushback, because critics say there is no place for it in school. During this time, social-emotional learning is one of the most important things we can learn.

In the end

When all of this is said and done, I hope we do not have to hear the words "social distancing" and "self-quarantine" for a long, long time. For most of us, this may be one of the most difficult times we will experience. When I am feeling overwhelmed, I turn to my meditation practices and connect with family.

Peter DeWitt is a former K-5 public school principal turned author, presenter, and independent consultant. DeWitt provides insights and advice for education leaders.

COMMENTARY

Published on March 17, 2020, in Education Week

I've Been Teaching Online For Years. Here's How to Prevent Burnout During A School Closure

5 essential tips to structure your day in this unstructured time

By Kiesha Easley

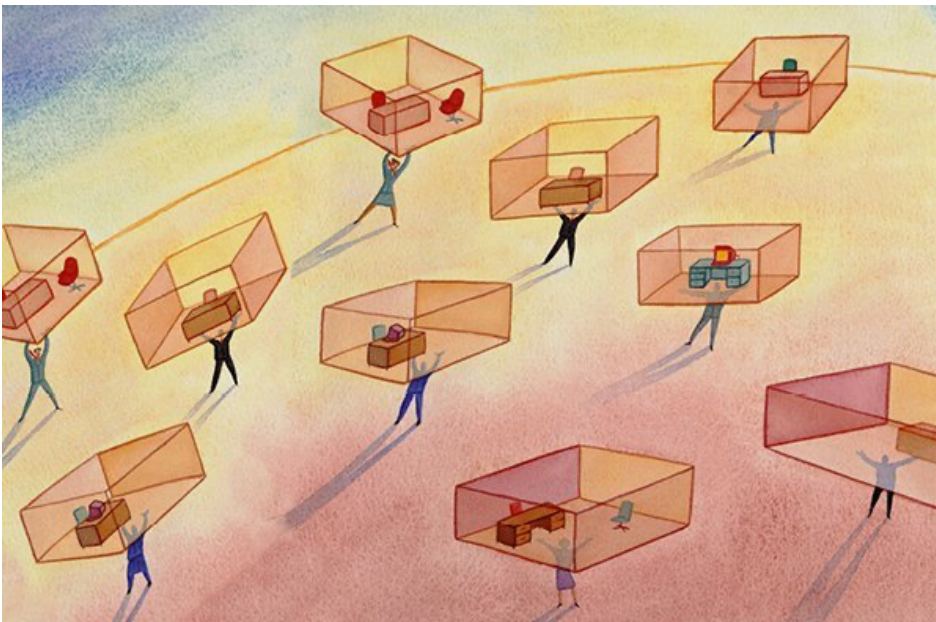
Yes, it is possible to experience burnout while teaching online.

With the current surge in schools turning to the web to keep instruction going while physical buildings are closed, many teachers are being thrust into teaching 100 percent online for the first time. For some, especially those on the outside looking in, this may seem like a dream. But this shift may take teachers who are already quite exhausted to full-fledged burnout.

In 2011, I made a bold move and began working completely online. My family and friends thought I had miraculously scored a piece of heaven when they saw me working in my pajamas, but what they didn't know was that the reason I had on those pajamas was because I had been up for over 24 hours straight trying to meet a deadline that had crept up on me—and I was severely burned out.

I know what you're thinking: *Why did you wait until the last minute to get all your work done? Why hadn't you organized your time better?*

It started innocently enough. I would wake up early to usher the kids off to school, then as soon as I returned and logged into the computer, I found myself answering one email after the next, clicking one link after another, browsing one website for information after another.



Then, somehow I'd end up scrolling social media in the name of "researching to find valuable resources."

Days would roll by this way. Just because I was working from home didn't mean I was getting more rest. Then add a few all-nighters or near all-nighters, and you have a volatile mix of burnout juice.

So what can you glean from my experience?

You have to treat working from home the same way you would in your classroom—pajamas or not. Even though I was working from my dining room table and not my desk in a classroom, I learned that structure and time management are two of the most essential skills for efficiently teaching online.

I learned some important strategies along the way.

1. Conduct essential self-care activities first, preferably right after you wake. Yes, you should still get up and brush teeth, comb hair, shave, and/or even put on makeup (where applicable) if you know at some point you'll need to be seen—even if only by video. (Importantly, during this time of uncertainty, you do not want to find yourself in an emergency situation in which you have to leave your home quickly. If you're already dressed, you'll be able to do this at a moment's notice.)

You will be tempted to just roll out of bed and tiptoe downstairs for some coffee. Then while you're conducting your morning browse of your notifications, news, and a myriad of other things we check on our phones when we have a quiet moment, you'll be tempted to respond to emails.

That morphs into trying to problem-solve, and then you've somehow shifted into completing work activities.

2. Plan your week, and schedule the tasks you need to get done. That means you need to set specific times for specific tasks to maintain structure for your day. While a to-do list is a useful visual tool, if your tasks are not set for specific times and lengths of time, you will ultimately find yourself struggling to get things done.

Schedule the most important, must-get-done today, essential activities first. Checking and responding to emails can seem essential, but it can become a rabbit-trail activity that leads to more rabbit-trail activities that could likely end in hours passing of unproductivity.

Remember to schedule your household chores to determine which chores will get done and when.

3. Set some alarms on your phone to enforce structure. There will be no bells ringing to remind you that valuable time is passing. The key to making this work, is setting realistic time limits on your work. We often underestimate how long a task will take.

4. Meal prep the night before or first thing in the morning, especially if you have children at home. And then be diligent about scheduling those meal and break times logically throughout your day.

Working from home can easily become a marathon of sitting in a chair and snacking while typing away at the computer until your body suffers. Just mindlessly snacking while you work can easily usher

in an unhealthy eating habit. You can ward off burnout by carving out adequate time to take a break, actually enjoy what you're eating, and rest your brain.

5. Get out, and get some fresh air as much as possible. Seriously, take advantage of the flexibility that comes with working from home. You could even choose to set up your workstation on your patio or in your yard, if your internet range will allow it. If you have the capability to go to a park or another place you enjoy, do that, too.

Even though structure and time management are important, this is an unusual time in history, so allow yourself some flexibility. Every day won't go exactly according to plan, and that's okay. The point is to keep yourself healthy.

Kiesha Easley is a certified educator in Columbia, S.C., with over 17 years of teaching experience, nine of which have been online. She also offers wellness coaching for educators.

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Published by Editorial Projects in Education, Inc.
6935 Arlington Road, Suite 100
Bethesda, MD, 20814
Phone: (301) 280-3100
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