

ACSI Town Hall

Links and Tips from Dr. Beadle

May 6, 2020

Best Practices in Online Learning



Psalm 4:6-8 New International Version (NIV)

⁶Many, LORD, are asking, "Who will bring us prosperity?"

Let the light of your face shine on us.

⁷Fill my heart with joy
when their grain and new wine abound.

⁸In peace I will lie down and sleep,
for you alone, LORD,
make me dwell in safety.

Quick Tips from the Town Hall Meeting for the school leader:

1. Your school "successfully" launched remote learning for the crisis, now:
 - a. Communicate
 - b. Appreciate and Encourage
 - c. Equip
 - d. Listen
 - e. Challenge
2. You want to take the best of your online experience and add it to your face to face campus:
 - a. Pray
 - b. Create vision with stakeholders and Board
 - c. Visit virtually or in person, 3 schools that are one step ahead
 - d. Plan
 - e. Fund Raise

An article written by Dr. Beadle

Reopening 2020

Whether your school building reopens in August is out of your hands for the most part. It is certainly in God's hands. School leader Bill McGee writes about this so well in his recent article- [Don't Waste This Pandemic](#).

You may be like me and want to be pro-active and not reactive. So, could I provide 12 questions in Part I? The answers would help you plan now so that your school reopens well. In Part II, I suggest 7 actions, that also need taken now, that will allow you to help the school accelerate into a preferred future.

I do admit a couple of things up front:

The tyranny of the urgent can be all consuming. From talking to school leaders, many are to the point where remote learning is happening quite nicely (or at least happening!). They have time to think.

Your goal should not just be to get back to normal. If it is and you succeed, you will have missed a great opportunity. There is an expectation that things will be different in the future, and the future will be a "new normal." Many people, organizations, and governments expect things to be different as illustrated by the article: [Schools Will Look Very Different When They Reopen](#) (says the California Governor). So, the question is whether we want to just let the new normal happen to us, or do we want to be intentional and proactive in shaping the new normal. Winston Churchill said: "Never waste a good crisis." We may never have an opportunity like this again to craft a new normal for our schools.

Part I- 12 Questions to help plan a successful Reopening

1. Could you pull together a task force to plan for the reopening? This would include representatives of all stakeholders (all those impacted by the reopening). Give them a clear mandate to have a plan ready for August or one for even later. They would be forward looking and not deal with the current concerns. They could collaborate with or learn from similar schools.
2. If the government or parents demand social distancing, how would you cut class sizes (think students coming to school at different times or some online classes as an option)? How would you handle arrival, assemblies, meals, recess, dismissal and after school care?
3. How will you ensure the health of students and staff? Will staff and students have their temperature scanned prior to coming in the building? Do you need to hire increased nursing (or cleaning) staff to start?
4. What PPE (personal protective equipment) must be ordered and required to be worn?
5. Do you need to maintain the typical calendar or school day?
6. What adjustments need made to after school activities?
7. What is the plan to sterilize and sanitize the building (busses?) before school reopens, during the school day and then after each day ends?

8. How can you leverage this crisis for spiritual growth during the coming year? What theme could you have that builds on the experiences of this crisis?
9. Who will be trained and ready to deal with emotional needs that staff or students may bring back to the campus?
10. How will teachers assess the starting place academically of their students? What guidelines will they be given that change the physical and academic plans they have made in the past?
11. What training do students and teachers need to ensure safety?
12. What volunteers are needed to help make these plans work and how will they be recruited and trained?

In Part II, I suggest 7 actions, that also need taken now, that will allow you to help the school accelerate into a preferred future.

1. Communication needs to increase (and I know you have been doing a lot). Education can be obtained many places today. What makes your school special is likely the community feeling and the relationships that cannot be found elsewhere. So, leverage that with varied and planned communications that differ by audience. Who is calling the Students? Parents? Donors? Teachers? What videos have been produced? It must have been encouraging when administrators at one Christian school delivered pizzas to teacher homes (and maintained social distance and used plastic gloves). Have you had a Zoom meeting with parents where they can ask questions?
2. Fund Raising (or friend raising). This can be an opportune time to raise funds. Convincing donors of the need should be easier than ever. A recent non-attender dropped off a \$200,000 check at our church door last week since he assumed a need. Donors are more available to consider needs. There are those severely financially effected by the pandemic and we want to help or empathize with them. Many donors have not been economically impacted (some may have prospered) during this pandemic. Changes in how we raise funds need to be made as [this article](#) illustrates. This is the time to lay out a systematic, aggressive plan to friend raise and fund raise.
3. Appoint a high-powered group to consider/implement changes in how you offer education. As a leader told me this week, their strategic plan that included educational changes has been accelerated by this crisis.
 - a. That school is now looking at how carefully planned online courses can help them accomplish their mission (and save money). Dr. Jay Ferguson, the Head of School of Grace Community School in Tyler, Texas [recently said](#): "Every Christian school in the U.S.

Jay goes on to say: "I read an excellent article the other day, called *Leading Beyond the Blizzard: Why Every Organization is Now a Startup*. In the article, Andy Crouch and others noted that, for non-profits (and, presumably, for-profit businesses, too) COVID-19 is not just a "blizzard" - a small storm to hunker down and get through, only to climb out and get back to business as usual. Instead, the precipitous fall of the economy and uncertain future of the virus has created a 12 to 18 month "mini ice age," which will fundamentally change how non-profits do business."

that sees remaining in business as part of its future has converted, or is converting, to some form of virtual schooling.” Could a hybrid offering of online and face to face classes be a win-win-win for students, teachers, and the school?

- b. Families have gotten used to flexible learning that lets them choose where and when they learn. How can your school offer some elements of that? Does every student in a high school math class need to be on the same page at the same time?
 - c. What elements of remote learning do teachers and students want to maintain?
 - d. Is this the time to think about a [university model](#) school where classes are offered certain days? Could it be on the same campus with a “normal” school?
 - e. How can deeper learning and problem-based learning take a step forward? The book [Mind Shift](#) offers these and other practical ideas.
 - f. What are dreams and hopes for change that you or others at your school have had? This may be the best time to consider and adopt a few of them.
4. Changes in how we retain students. Using data, you need to offer what current families want. This may have changed during the crisis or [it may be what recent research has shown](#). We do need to offer excellent remote learning now so parents see the obvious difference from what local options are offering. Students need to feel engaged, appreciated and yes, even loved!
5. Have a small, talented group work on changes in how we recruit students. This crisis represents an extraordinary time when parents that have not previously chosen Christian Schools may look at new options for their children. The options they have chosen may have let them down in this crisis. There need to be marketing changes to reach them so they know of the great local option they may have missed thus far. Go after past families that may have left and found the grass was not greener.
6. Some schools need to be changing their financial models. This may be the most challenging but also offer the most needed change and most opportunity. Can we look at new financial models? Let’s lay out a 5 year plan to get teacher/staff salaries at a respectable level that is funded by tuition. This is the time to develop several financial models that can offer choices when we are confronted with a reality in the coming months. These would all need to support a flourishing school.
7. What short or long-term maintenance could be done now while the students and teachers are gone? Might contractors need work and provide bids that allow the school to do more than had been planned?

Conclusion:

If the NBA has created a [25-day return-to-basketball plan](#), couldn't/shouldn't we start planning now for what is to come? Maybe I should ask it differently—We have a pandemic that we obviously did not create. Shouldn't we look for the opportunity in this crisis?

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Here are other resources for school leaders:

[iNACOL National Standards for Quality Online Courses \(v2\)](#)

[Promising Practices in Online Learning: Management and Operations of Online Programs](#)

[Blending Learning: The Evolution of Online and Face-to-Face Education from 2008–2015](#)

[10 Elements of High Quality Digital Learning](#)

[Seven Distance Learning Priorities to Consider Before Reopening Schools - MindShift](#)

[A Little Advice for Efficient, Effective, Online Higher Ed \(has applications to K-12\)](#)

[When school campuses open in the fall, students might find a soberingly different experience](#)

[Schools Will Look Very Different When They Reopen, Says California Governor](#)

[Admin 101: Our Shift to Remote Fund Raising](#)

[A Blueprint for Back to School-What will it take to get schools ready?](#)

Coronavirus school community sample: [Kiev Christian Academy](#)

The [ACSI Coronavirus Resource](#) page is updated daily with ideas, helps, past and future webinars and much more.

Leaders can join the ACSI [Administrators Community Group](#). There are so many good ideas....

[5 Ways to Maintain Your Well-Being During a Crisis](#) with Dr. Henry Cloud (video).

[Being Psychologically Healthy During Times of Crisis](#) with Dr. Henry Cloud (podcast)

[A New Reality: Getting Remote Learning Right](#) from Educational Leadership – Free download

[5 tips for being a leader in the virtual world](#)

[Living the Coronavirus Work-From-Home Life? Here Are All the Tech Tips You Need](#)

[Tips for Teachers](#)

Additional tips or links for teachers:

[5 Myths About Remote Teaching in the Covid-19 Crisis](#)

[Resources for Teaching Online Due To School Closures – The Edublogger](#) (there are items here for the school leader)

[5 tips for teachers working from home - Futurity](#)

[Please Do a Bad Job of Putting Your Courses Online](#)

[Help! I Have to Suddenly Teach Online! What Should I Do?](#)

[Joint Response Regarding COVID-19 and Advice on Transitioning Face-to-Face Courses Online](#)

[So You Want to Temporarily Teach Online](#)

[*Going Virtual! Unique Needs and Challenges of K-12 Online Teachers*](#)

[Teaching Effectively in a New Environment \(scroll towards the bottom\)](#)

Online course toolkit

[For Non-LMS Online Courses](#)

[For LMS Online Courses](#)

[Digital Solutions For Daily Tasks](#)

[Wellness: 6 tips for taking care of yourself during this stressful time](#)

[Remote Work Tips](#)

[Sample Schedule for Teachers](#)

[Coronavirus and teaching from home: Ten ways to advise and instruct students remotely](#)

[Free recording for Teachers: Teaching Remotely Online](#)

[Ten Best Practices for Teaching Online](#)

[Going Online in a Hurry: What to Do and Where to Start](#)

Resources For Teaching Online Due To School Closures

Stress-Busting Strategies for Educators

**Facebook group for International educator online learning sharing
International Educator Temporary School Closure for Online Learning**

Facebook group for Online Resources for AP Teachers

Resources for certain grade levels

Early Years

Lower Primary

Upper Primary

Middle School

High School

Education Companies Offering Free Subscriptions due to School Closings

How to Create an Online Classroom | Stanford Online High School

Best Practices for an Online Classroom | Stanford Online High School

Best Practices in Remote Learning

A letter to brave teacher moving from the Classroom to Online Teaching without notice! (from an experienced online teacher)

Dear Teacher:

I have made the move you are making. Here are tips I have learned over time-

Above all, personalize and humanize the communication experience whenever possible. Make a point when you talk to your students to inquire about their interests and hobbies. Find out what is important to them and of course lay the foundation for addressing their spiritual needs. Be careful though that you don't come across as pushy or phony. Work the information you gather into your course explanations and feedback for graded assignments.

Always remember that you are not merely teaching a course; you are shaping a precious human life.

Feedback: regular, relevant detailed comments are essential. Include in your feedback links to additional resources, colorful graphics, charts, videos, and even PDFs or DOCs they can print out. Introduce them to Quizlet.

Every teacher should have a website like Weebly that is very user friendly and loaded with everything a student needs for success in a particular course. Make it visually appealing and update it regularly like a blog.

The online experience should not be an automated anonymous machine-like kind of interaction. Sometimes students want it to be that way because it's a little bit like hiding in the back of the room where they won't be noticed, but that's why the teacher should work very hard to find ways to overcome that and strive to make those human connections. Regular voice contact in a variety of ways is essential for creating that connection. The old-fashioned telephone is still one of the most important tools in our toolbox.

The video tools that we have at our disposal are amazing and extremely useful, but require us to plan carefully and prepare thoroughly for those skillfully crafted coordinated moments. You don't want to spend half of your presentation time adjusting your microphone or lighting or responding to disruptions lurking in the background. Video communications must be professional and polished. Be mindful of the time constraints and stick to your agenda. Respect the time of others and say so. You as the presenter must take the time to practice and prepare the experience so that you come across as a competent educator. (On a personal note, Mark, the way you do video conferencing is one of your best skills)

Emails: Instead of cookie cutter one size fits all boilerplate email templates, tailor each email to a particular student. Whatever the subject, always begin with a simple opening sentence (Thank you for contacting me about that. Your question indicates you are a thoughtful student) and conclude with a laudatory or complimentary remark (I always appreciate the hard work you do.) it only takes a little extra effort to write what should be an individualized caring and concerned email. It doesn't have to be long or too wordy.

A few more words about written communications like emails: It is often very easy to be misunderstood because we don't have the crucial element of tone or body language to help us. You certainly want to avoid sarcasm for example. But re-read emails before you send them and try to look at each with a fresh clear eye as if you're seeing it for the first time and think to yourself how is this going to come across to my reader. When you wrote it perhaps it made perfect sense to you, but try to think of the ways in which your reader might construe your remarks. Emojis get very tiresome, very quickly even for young people. And of course avoid email shorthand like btw or lol. Use a signature always providing useful relevant information including contact information, a favorite verse, or perhaps a logo. Think of the signature as your business card.

Build connections between you and the student by reaching out to the parents with a phone call or email regularly; not to report problems only but to let parents know that they are a welcome partner in the online experience. Opening those lines of communication and building rapport will serve you well when more thorny issues arise. I can't stress enough how important it is to make the parent connection.

Do the same (build connections) with school officials especially lab supervisors or others with direct regular contact with your student. Encourage them to contribute relevant information that might help you respond to the needs of your students.

Provide students with practical details about how to work the course. Help them with navigation issues while they're on the phone with you seated at the computer. Be familiar with how the particular device or browser they're using works. What might appear to be a technical problem may just be a viewing or setting issue. Screen sharing is a useful skill to develop but is not for the faint of heart.

The physical learning environment: The seclusion of a quiet bedroom might work for some, but most students succeed best at the kitchen table or a common area where there are supervising supportive eyes to keep them focused on the task at hand. Yes, there might be sibling distractions or a barking pet who hears a stranger's voice while your Skyping with a student, but take a moment to ask about and take an interest in the distraction in a positive supportive way and then you can steer the student back to the subject at hand. Regular and consistently enforced computer habits help student stay on pace; so an engaged teacher will monitor activity logs (and let students know you can and will do that). Encourage them to work regularly and daily rather than trying to do a whole lot of work once or twice a week. The tortoise always beats the hare.

In all of your interactions verbal or written, always assume that in addition to you and your student there is always someone else in the room probably a parent or a curious loved one. There is no such thing as a private conversation in the cyberworld. So you should always assume that the whole world is listening and watching. Always talk to your students with respect and dignity just as you would if their parents were sitting right over their shoulder because they probably are. And, of course, our precious Heavenly Father is always watching over us all.

Treating students as a partner in the learning process is much more effective than coming across as the all powerful authority figure making demands. Try to use the pronoun we instead of I.

Figure out your students learning style (verbal, visual, kinetic) and incorporate that into your instructional practices. Be aware of other special needs or physical challenges a student might have. These are often my most amazing students because the online learning environment allows them to excel in ways that they cannot in a traditional classroom.

That brings us to helicopter parents. Sometimes they have a reason like the above mentioned for being so. Welcome the helicopter moms and be grateful for them. Turn them into an asset instead of a nuisance by providing a supportive voice, a listening ear, and specific advice about how they can contribute to the success of their child

Be proactive in anticipating situations looming on the horizon. Leaning forward allows you to head off potential problems before they become disasters. The ability to anticipate what might happen next is one of the most important skills an online teacher needs to develop.

Grading assignments and responding to students should always be done as promptly as possible. I once had a student who complained that I didn't answer his emails. Upon closer inspection I observed that he had sent me five emails in the space in 15 minutes. When a student needs help, he needs it right then. The longer he has to wait for a reply the more frustrating his online experience will be.

I hope this helps you help students! You can do it!



Yours in Christ,

James Freels
