



HERE WE GO

Suzanne Bouffard

LEARNING AS MUCH AS WE CAN AS FAST AS WE CAN

We are all learning, and we are all vulnerable, as we navigate these anxious times and the unexpected transition to distance learning.

Like so many students around the world, my children are learning at home, thanks to the impressive efforts of their teachers, administrators, and school support staff. My 4th grader's teacher recently wrote in one of her weekly updates to the students, "I promise I'm learning as much as I can, as fast as I can, so that we can create a fun approach to distant learning."

I was touched and inspired by her message. In a few words, she made herself open and vulnerable, conveyed her investment in their engagement, and modeled the importance of ongoing learning.

We are all learning, and we are all vulnerable, as we navigate these anxious times and the unexpected transition to distance learning. The need for professional learning has never been more urgent, and collaboration has never been more pivotal. We are "building the plane while flying it," as one of this issue's authors points out, and since there are no manuals for teaching during a pandemic, we are relying on each other to develop the skills we need to be the kind of engineers and pilots our kids need to fly.

This issue of *The Learning Professional* highlights some of the many ways educators are learning, sharing, and evolving to meet the quickly shifting needs of students and staff. Because our readers are in varying stages of school closures and reopenings, the issue aims to address both the present and future of teaching and learning.

Addressing the immediate term, authors share how to support educators' and students' emotional and instructional needs, strengthen teacher-student connections during distance learning, and promote students' self-regulation so they can stay engaged.

Looking to the not-too-distant future, others write about how to plan for the changes and uncertainty that lie ahead. And looking across the shifting stages of crisis and recovery, authors write about maintaining instructional vision and leadership strategies through the ups and downs.

In the Tools section, partner organizations share strategies for keeping relationships with students strong. In the Updates section, we share information about the other forms of support we are providing during this crisis, including timely blog posts and a series of weekly webinars on topics ranging from coaching to self-care to equity for students with disabilities, English learners, and historically marginalized students.

Our At a Glance infographic includes data we've gathered during the webinars about educators' needs, plans, and professional learning during the pandemic.

I'm grateful to all the professionals who contributed to this issue for enthusiastically agreeing to share their wisdom on an impressively short timeline, even as they navigated a host of other challenges, from urgent student and staff needs to ill family members. Their hard work is yet another indication of the way educators go above and beyond to support students and colleagues, even in the very toughest of times.

At the end of her note to the students, my child's teacher added, "I appreciate all of you for working hard and helping me become a better teacher." We at Learning Forward appreciate all of you for helping each other, and us, be better at what we do.

If crisis reveals character, the pandemic is revealing to the whole world the passion, commitment, and excellence of educators that we have the privilege to see every day. ■



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