

Education Principles & Practices in a Pandemic

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The COV-19 pandemic which brought in-person teaching and learning to a halt in most states set up improbable, if not near-impossible challenges, for educators, particularly front-line teachers. The impact is yet to be realized. A loss of student learning in reading and math is one critical affect while the other is socialization. Daily engagement of teacher-student and student-student are essential in human development and learning.

With the beginning of a new school year and whatever approach a school takes, what considerations do those who manage and lead education need to address to bring about a positive and effective SY2021 and beyond? The health and welfare of students and staff is a given.

- 1) Schools open with a commitment to implementing social-emotional learning (SEL) practices to bring everyone together and establish a caring and supportive environment
- 2) Use one-to-one engagement and observation to determine individual student performance status (i.e., Zone of Proximal Development) and social/emotional needs
- 3) Employ project-based learning with full-class participation to foster early, meaningful learning experiences
- 4) Invite students to maintain a journal with research showing that journaling can serve as a protective factor against anxiety and depression
- 5) Have grade/subject curriculum prepared in a format (i.e., digitized or on paper) that may be shared with parents who may desire to contribute to their child(ren)'s learning
- 6) Implement formative assessment practices on the heels of instruction that run the gamut from quizzes to unit assessments with heightened student engagement
- 7) Engage in creative ways to involve parents and families in the educative process

NYS testing in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math have value for administrators and teachers in those grades to acquire a measure of student performance for the current grade and preparation for the next. These tests are standards-based and untimed with the potential of providing teachers with timely data for analysis and action. However, NYS testing results in reading and math must be presented and used in a manner that is not hurtful and damaging to students and staff in this period of the pandemic or otherwise. NYS testing results need to subscribe to the following:

- State testing results for reading and math in grade 3 through 8 are used strictly for teacher diagnosis of their students' learning, as well as self-reflection.
- Schools inform parents of their child(ren)'s learning status and what it means based on the results.
- Testing should take place later in the school year: mid-May into early June.
- Student testing will be computer-based (CBT) where practical with clear proctoring guidelines prepared by the SED in advance.
- Reporting of student testing results are provided to schools prior to the end of the year for teacher review and sharing.

American education is currently in a condition not ever seen before. It will require sensitivity and understanding in supporting educators to deal appropriately with the challenges set before them.