

Some thoughts to support school leaders in planning for pupils' return in September 2020

23 June 2020

Introduction

The following is intended to support school leaders in preparing for September 2020.

The booklet consists of:

Section 1

A list some questions to consider in planning. This is not meant to be exhaustive but some to which others can be added.

Section 2

A summary of research findings on the most helpful actions others have faced in planning a return for pupils after periods of extended school closures.

Returning to school – some strategic questions

1. What is the vision for your school moving forward and creating a new normal?
2. How are the staff, children, parents and governors' part of shaping this vision? How will you ensure the demographics of those involved in the process are reflective of your whole school community?
3. How do you ensure that every adult in the school 'takes ownership of' and acts in line with the school's vision and protocol?
4. What have you learnt through the lockdown experience and therefore need to add into the school culture, curriculum and training plan e.g.; Black Lives Matter, importance of looking after your mental health etc.?
5. Are your current teaching and learning strategies and ethos suitable to support our children post lock down? What does learning look like?
6. How will you continue to identify and support vulnerable children and families?
7. How are you ensuring that children with EHC plans have all their needs met and that they are receiving good quality of education?
8. How are you preparing for the potential increase of children requiring SEN support? How will they be identified and provided for?
9. How will you ensure that all staff members understand the current needs of the school community, particularly vulnerable children, those with SEN needs, socio-economic disadvantage, parent loss of employment, domestic violence, substance abuse; Black children (and their families) experiencing trauma linked to events culminating in Black Lives Matter protests, etc.?
10. What school structures are needed to support staff to deliver these?
 - Are your class/groups timetables appropriate? How will you ensure that there is a longer registration/settling in time at the beginning of a session and reflection time at the end of the session?
 - How will the school use support staff to ensure effective learning during Covid limitations?
 - Who do staff go to when they have a problem that they cannot resolve?
 - Are there any adaptations that will be needed to the behaviour policy?
 - How will you ensure that your behaviour policy is inclusive and supportive of the needs of all children; and is fairly and consistently applied?
 - Do you have staff available to encourage and support children to come into school/leave their parents at the school gate?
 - How will staff greet and engage with children and staff? Is this agreed and during the process how will you ensure consistency?
11. How do you know what your children know and what their next steps are without testing? How will you value their wider (including non-academic) experiences gained at home?
12. How do you ensure conditions for learning are safe and effective? How do you know how each child is feeling each day – are they ready for learning?
13. How are you using professional judgement to assess the mental, physical, emotional and academic needs of the pupils and how are you using this knowledge to meet the needs of every individual?

14. How will you continue to support staff with their own mental health, wellbeing and anxiety so that they can effectively support the children and families?
15. What preparation have you had with your staff to meet the range of challenges they may face?
16. How will you provide opportunities for the staff to share concerns and ideas about supporting individual children?
17. What are the implications for individual roles e.g. may have more children disclosing, gap has widened between children, how will office staff manage parent's anxiety at the front door whilst maintaining respect, sensitivity, compassion and consistency?
18. What strategies will the school use to encourage children to come in if they are anxious?
19. What transition ideas can you use for all children and individuals?
20. What are your overall strategies for learning opportunities for children in and out of school?
21. How will you make the most out of the external agencies you are engaged with?

Returning to school: questions for reflection on curriculum, home learning and digital inclusion, student support (June 2020)

The following reference documents and questions can be used as a starting point for discussion and reflection on the recent lockdown period. The documents, which reference the Australian experience can be accessed from the following link:

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1X4Tlr7LuA3puoFRPncINycXOh6oL_xs?usp=sharing

<https://education.nsw.gov.au/news/secretary-update/every-student-podcast-john-hattie>

- Visible Learning Effect Sizes When Schools Are Closed: What Matters and What Does Not (April 2020) John Hattie
- The New Normal of Learning: Building Back Better: (May 2020) John Hattie which links to:
- Supporting Vulnerable Children in the Face of a Pandemic: University of Melbourne (April 2020) Hattie, Graham, et al

1. Curriculum: catching up on lost learning

Hattie: evidence from Christchurch earthquake

Let's recall the effects of the **Christchurch earthquakes in 2011** which severely disrupted access to schools.

.....**strike research** (which) **showed no effects at this upper school level with positive effects in some cases.** Sure enough **the performance of Christchurch students went up** and **as schools resumed the scores settled back down.**

Why? **Because teachers tailored learning more to what students could NOT do** whereas often school is about **what teachers think students need even if students can already do the tasks.**

- Make sure to provide **opportunities to learn what students do not know** and **do not engage them in busy work**
- It is **not the time in class, but what we do in the time we have, that matters**

Graham: Provision of targeted content (University of Melbourne paper p20)

'What we should be doing for our most vulnerable kids now and in recovery is making sure they are **safe and ready to learn.** The **equity gaps are yawning caverns** at this time in terms of **preparedness, support and the technology needed to learn remotely.** If there was ever a time **when teachers needed to know where every student is and what they need to learn next this is it.** We need knowledgeable teachers who understand assessment, intervention, differentiation and evaluation (acronym is AIDE) of learning and lesson design. **We need to focus on what is important content and important practice** and, in recovery, we particularly need to **support those vulnerable students** making schooling.'

Graham (2020)

Learning content needs to be targeted towards numeracy, and literacy and language development in the early years, and consolidation of already covered material in later years.

There also needs to be an emphasis on curricula that equips students with effective psychosocial practices and social and emotional learning (SEL). This may include supporting teachers to deliver a range of targeted child-friendly learning experiences that emphasise health and wellbeing, i.e. sports, art, drama, music, games, storytelling.

Questions for reflection for subject areas and overall curriculum

Based in the extracts on page 1:

Curriculum and learning from March-July – assessing and addressing gaps

1. What was the **key new learning** in the scheme of learning from March -July?
2. What **key knowledge** and **skills** from **previous learning** (September to February or previously) is essential for the key new learning to be fully understood?
3. How much of the **key new learning** have you been teaching remotely during the lockdown?
4. How are **assessing students** to **identify gaps** in the **key new learning** and **previous learning**?
5. What is your **plan to address the gaps in learning** for groups of students with varying levels of engagement in home learning (or if the home learning was not designed to cover the curriculum planned for March-July)?

Curriculum and learning from September 2020

If the face to face time in school for your subject is reduced in the Autumn term of the next academic year and /or you are catching up on the March-July key new learning:

1. How would you **adapt your scheme of learning** to focus on the **most important content** and **important practice**? What would you include? What would you leave out?
2. What will you **do more of in class**? What will you **do less of**?
3. How will you **support the students** who still have **gaps in learning** from the previous term (or before that?)

2. Reflecting on home learning

Hattie: effective support for home learning (Visible Learning Effect Sizes When Schools Are Closed: What Matters and What Does Not)

- **Deliver mini-classes using social media**, make them clear and provide oodles of opportunities for feedback.
- Make it **skill-based** and provide **exciting ways to practice**
- Project-based (learning) can (but does not need to) lead to busy work with little learning.
- Worry more about subjects that parents are least likely to be able to help with like math and science
- **Encourage kids and parents to read, read, read** and also talk about their reading so the story is important, the vocabulary is stretched and then simultaneously keep teaching the skills of reading to make reading pleasurable.

Self-regulation (See <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/tools/guidance-reports/metacognition-and-self-regulated-learning/>)

(Students who) **know how to self-regulate** - they know **when to apply various strategies, they know when to hold out distractions, they know about their thinking skills, and they know how to self-evaluate.**

...we need to **deliberately teach students these skills** (so they) **could they work through messy structures, work out what the directions really meant, and strove for feedback more about where to next?** Students in schools that already teach these skills say that this **work on teaching self-regulation is now really paying off.**

Learning from March-July – reflecting on the approach to home learning

1. What has worked well in your approach to home learning?
2. What were the key challenges in delivering and supporting home learning?
3. Looking at Hattie's recommendations above for home learning, how many are reflected in your approach?
4. Had you done any work on self-regulation prior to the lockdown? If you had, could you see evidence of the impact of the work on student engagement?
5. How have you used other research on memory, formative assessment etc in home learning?

If home learning continues: (See p4 for research findings)

1. How will you develop your approach to home learning if some teaching still has to be carried out remotely next year?
2. What staff and student training needs have you identified? How are you addressing them?
3. What developments and support are needed in relation to the use of digital technology?
4. What have you learned from the experience that may help to improve teaching and learning going forward?

Effective home learning (Hattie)

Tasks

We need to find ways to ensure that students at home **engage in the optimal tasks**;
(not *busy tasks*, not just *projects* that keep them entertained, not *boring repetitive activities*)

The choice of task matters critically, but let me remind you of the Christchurch earthquake finding: It is the **choice of tasks relative to where students are now** and **where they need to go** next that advances their learning.

Diagnosis and feedback

Use the technology for great diagnosis;

- **share scoring rubrics and success criteria up front** with students before they get too involved in the task;
- **be clear** (teacher clarity matters more when students are not in front of you to correct, cajole, give instant feedback to), and **evaluate progress as you do in the physical classroom**.
- Also, build **formative evaluation opportunities** into the tasks.
- Remember, **if students get stuck, do not know what to do next, or make errors, you** should not depend on the parents to know about the errors or what best to do next. We do not want parents giving feedback in a way that ends up with them doing the work! **Take ownership of feedback as much as possible.**

Social interaction including use of technology (Hattie)

- Create as many **opportunities for social interaction**, not just between you and the student, but **using technology for students to work, share, interact, and learn together**, as you so often do in the regular classroom
- We know the **effect size of technology remains low** and has been so for the last 50 years. As Dylan Wiliam has often said, technology is the revolution that is still coming!
- The **effect of distance learning is small (.14)** but that does not mean it is NOT effective—it means it does not matter whether teachers undertake teaching in situ or from a distance over the internet. **What we do matters, not the medium of doing it.**
- I do note that the **highest effects of digital technology are**:
 - **interactive videos (.54)**
 - **intelligent tutoring systems (.51)** in **writing (.42)**, and in **mathematics (.35)**.
 - The lowest effects are the **presence of mobile phones (-.34—turn them off)**, and the presence of **one to one laptops (.16)**. *However, most of these studies have been undertaken in classrooms and thus are perhaps not so relevant in this crisis.*

Perhaps the most exciting use of technology for our current situation is the **increasing power of social media to enhance learning**. Marie Davis (2018) has explored **asking students to use social media such as Edmodo to have students send questions and talk about what they do not know**.

They are more likely to do this on social media than directly to the teacher. <https://www.edmodo.com/>

edmodo



3. Reflecting on digital inclusion

Increasing Digital inclusion (University of Melbourne paper p21)

Consider a response that supports the immediate early relief and recovery need, but utilise the opportunity to increase digital access for the future. To address education equity and the digital divide, Gorski, P. (2005), suggests that **low digital inclusion, or "digital divide"** has traditionally described **inequalities in access to computers and the Internet** between groups of people based on one or more dimensions of social or cultural identity. However, Gorski, et.al., (2019) argue for a critical re-conceptualisation of the "digital divide" and its relationship within education, arguing **"access" should be fundamentally based not on physical access, but equity of access.**

Resta and Laferrière (2017) report five key dimensions of interventions aimed at addressing digital equity:

1. **Hardware and software connectivity**
2. **Meaningful and culturally relevant content** (i.e. broad-based curriculum support)
3. **Creating, sharing, and exchanging of digital content** (i.e. interactive e-learning fostering community)
4. **Educators who know how to use digital tools and resources** (i.e. targeted teacher professional development delivered in private-public partnerships)
5. **High quality research on the application of digital technologies** (i.e. all practices carefully monitored and evaluated to inform decision makers on areas requiring improvement and support).

To address low digital inclusion, Livingstone and Helper (2007) note that while providing home Internet access can help alleviate relative socioeconomic disadvantage, it cannot overcome the **relative disadvantage in terms of breadth and sophistication of Internet use.** They highlighted the "digital divide" in terms of such disparity in use, noting that **basic internet is typically associated with narrow, unadventurous use of the internet**, while the **more sophisticated facilitate broad ranging uses** that are more likely to **enable access to new opportunities** and the **realisation of individual and social goals**

1. What has the lockdown revealed about the digital divide in the student population in your school?
2. How does your curriculum help the more disadvantaged and vulnerable students to develop the 'more sophisticated broad-ranging uses' of the internet?
3. How will you continue to develop the skills of your school community in the use of digital technologies? Teachers, other staff, governors, students, parents, local community?
4. What are your key priorities in relation to digital inclusion?

5. Reflecting on support for students

Hattie: (Visible Learning Effect Sizes When Schools Are Closed: What Matters and What Does Not)

Over the next months many students will:

- look for **support from a trusted adult**
- **seek help from peers**
- seek ways to **express their feelings**
- (try to) **establish some sense of routine.**

Many of us will go through feelings of **shock and disorganization**. There will be **altruistic or heroic phases and claims**, and **honeymoon periods of high morale** and **action and optimism**, but some will **feel angry, displaced, and lonely**.

Rob Gordon is an Australian who has studied the effects on schools from bushfires and talks about the desired state of fusion: **“In this state of fusion, members identify with each other because they share the same experience; they feel strong emotional attachments because of what they have undergone together and rapidly develop a shared culture of stories, symbols, and memories”** (2004).

- **Make sure every child experiences this fusion and becomes an insider in the online classroom.**
- **Build on symbols, rituals, and identity; model connectedness; use stories and other artefacts** so that when schools reopen there is a **symbol, a thing, an event—a mosaic, a play, stories, collective memories of the at-home socially distancing experience.**
- After Katrina, those who had **prior history of problems were more likely to show symptoms of traumatic stress, depression, sadness, anger, anxiety, and loneliness—for both students and teachers** (Osofsky, Osofsky, & Harris, 2007).

Schools, no matter via what medium, can be **hubs of response and recovery, a place to support emotional recovery and promote social togetherness**—and this is **as important as any achievement gains**.

10 characteristics of students which may indicate they are more likely to be affected by the suspension of normal schooling (University of Melbourne report p5)

1. Increased stress, social and emotional concerns with possible behavioural issues arising.
2. Low self-regulation to maintain learning progression, that has been highly dependent on the teacher
3. No access to quality learning strategies and guidance necessary to promote development
4. Less educational resources and activities relative to peers, in particular in relation to limited digital engagement
5. Continued and reaffirming experience of past lack of progress in school
6. Minimal concept of themselves as a learner at school, and likely the same at home. Hence impacting on future engagement in schooling such as absenteeism and dropouts
7. Lack of facility in critical reading and numeracy skills to move to the next level, and more likely to become part of the ‘low Matthew effect’(the rich get rich, the poor stay poor)
8. Living in homes which are not safe havens (for many of these students, school is the safe haven), there will be an exacerbation of physical and emotional health issues
9. Parents who have low capacity or desire to engage them in the schoolwork at home and who ignore or permit no engagement with schoolwork.
10. A loss in opportunity to engage, particularly for upper high school students preparing for high stakes exams.

1. What have been the key successes in working with vulnerable students during this period?
What are your key concerns?
2. What additional support systems will you put in place to support vulnerable students and their families, particularly those at key transition points.

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