



Three Ways Elementary School Education Will Change After the Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic is showing no signs of slowing down, and adaptation to the “new normal” is happening in every part of the U.S. from the economy, to healthcare, to sports, to education, and more. The public school system was one of the first major public entities to declare stay-at-home orders, and for the entirety of the spring and summer semesters, students from preschool through college had to adapt to learning from home via an internet connection.

The adaptation for the youngest members of the education sector was probably a bit easier, as the daily grind of school hadn't been ingrained in their heads yet, but for middle school and high school students, the coronavirus changed everything that they had known for the majority of their young lives.

Current

With [children's well being](#) in the minds of both sides of the argument, there have been heated discussions about returning kids to school for the fall semester. Those who want the school to continue online are nervous about the fact that nothing has really changed about COVID, so they are unsure why the school plan needs to change. Also, with all of the stipulations that would be required to send students back, some parents fear it will just be another situation where kids have to focus more on the *style* of learning than the learning itself, thus wanting to stick to “the new normal” rather than changing to another new normal.

There are [some education leadership organizations](#) that feel similar, regarding the focus on the style of learning, but because of this they believe students need to get back to the one-on-one style of education that allows students to ask questions, stay after class for extra help, and have a school full of resources at their disposal. Other proponents of the “send them back” side point to financial issues for parents who are already struggling due to setbacks in employment caused by COVID. Public school is, indeed, a tax-funded service, and though education is the primary reason it exists, it's also somewhat of a free form of childcare for a lot of families, offering inexpensive meals and a safe environment to interact with peers.

Some states have been able to compromise and are planning on sending students back on a staggered schedule. About 1/4th of the students will attend in-class instruction each day, while the other 3/4ths work from home. Each student would have one day on campus and 4 online. This would allow for those struggling students to get their one-on-one help, and also means the halls would not be completely full as they would be with a full plate of students.

Regardless of the route a given area takes, though, there is still yet *another* future event that will have to be adapted too, and that is the time when a vaccine is created and the world as we used to know it can once again be our regular. Should school just go back to the way things were, or should they adapt some of the methodologies used to educate during the coronavirus stand down periods? The jury is out, but expectations are aplenty.

According to Dr. D. Antonio Cantu, Associate Dean and Director of the Department of Education and [Online Doctorate of Education program](#) at Bradley University, “the impact of the pandemic on elementary schools is truly significant and indelible. The pandemic has caused us to reflect on how we define and deliver instruction to elementary students in a manner not experienced before. Specifically, the implementation of remote or distance learning in elementary schools, in a real time manner that the current situation warrants, has caused us to swing the pedagogical pendulum from in-person to online instructional delivery in a condensed and expedited timeframe that would have otherwise taken years to achieve. While elementary schools will return to in-person instruction on the other side of the pandemic, the collective takeaway for teachers, from their experience delivering instruction to students in the online teaching and learning environment they created during the pandemic, will continue to guide them for years to come. For many elementary teachers, while the situation was anything but ideal, engagement in online or hybrid/blended teaching and learning during the pandemic served to expand their pedagogical comfort zone and yielded some educational value added for their students, which will further guide teachers in the lesson planning process and in the instructional strategies and approaches they integrate into their respective classrooms for years to come.”

Future

Anytime there is a major event in a city or state, there are always talks about “how are things going to be after this?” With Hurricane Katrina as a fairly recent example, the city of New Orleans experienced catastrophic damage, and left more than a million people grieving, yet ultimately coming together to provide help to one another. For a little while after the storm, local residents would say things like “before Katrina” and “after Katrina” as time references, and expectations of great change were made. Now, only a decade and a half later, anyone in the city will say things are pretty much the same as they have always been.

The coronavirus, of course, is a much larger scale issue, and has effected the entire world, not just a lot of coastal cities on the Gulf of Mexico. To assume everything will be the same in the states after the vaccine cleans things up is probably a bit of a stretch, especially because there have been many silver linings found in the changes we were forced to make, school very much included.

Many experts believe that Zoom or some sort of teleconferencing will continue to be a part of elementary education, even if schools do go back to full classroom set ups. Sick students can Zoom into class, for instance, and after school help doesn't have to mean missing a bus.

Everyone likes options, and by most accounts, the “option” to continue things the way they were may be there for a lot of parents who liked having their kids at home. It's no secret that schoolyards can be mean places, too, so the telecommunication aspect of COVID schooling may also be able to help students who are bullied continue to learn while avoiding a stressful and depressive environment.

No matter what path is taken, before, during, and after the pandemic, those people in charge of academics seem to genuinely care about the kids and their education, no matter what position they are taking. Compromise will be extremely important, and keeping an open mind can help your kids get a fuller one!



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