**SIMULTANEOUS PLANNING**

April 26, 2020 Dr. Tim Uhl

Last week Governor Bullock announced that Montana schools could reopen beginning on May 7th as long as they implement social distancing and other safety measures. It became immediately apparent that we were not prepared to deal with all the variables: teachers who didn’t want to return, parents who didn’t want their children to return, masks for everyone, cleaning protocols, school days organized by shifts/cohorts, limiting recess and large groups, etc. I came across this article in Education Week which suggested that every school begin pulling together a working group now to plan for fall. Great advice and we need to start immediately.

We have begun planning together and are using this 6 Week Planning Guide. But what became apparent this past week was that we need to investigate simultaneous schooling—can a teacher deliver a class to some students in front of her while also delivering to students at home? We might have to deliver school to split shifts or we might have a number of immune compromised or anxious students who won’t be returning to the classroom. What could this look like? Does it have to be synchronous? Are the demands too great on teachers?

And here’s a competitive advantage. My guess is that many public schools will not be willing to develop simultaneous instruction. They will rely on expanded virtual classrooms. But these classrooms will struggle to provide community and connection. Our simultaneous plans must account for relationships.

If you haven’t had a chance to read the “Open Letter to Independent School Leaders,” make the time. It’s important to try to take a big picture view. I interview Dr. Eric Wearne, one of the coauthors, last week on the Catholic School Matters podcast. We discuss why they wrote the piece, their main findings, and their recommendations for schools moving forward. Leslie De Leonardis, the STEM Director at the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, also joined the podcast to discuss how valuable and relevant STEM can be in a remote learning environment.

We are moving toward a three-week plan for student and teacher learning.

· Week One will be introducing resources (online and print) and pathways for student learning over the summer. It’s important to show students and parents how to use the resources while they are with you. This is the last week of school with students.

· Week Two will be a technology and app week. Teachers will be challenged to obtain certifications in their main platforms (e.g. Google Classroom) and learning about technology tools and apps.

· Week Three will be in depth professional development on three topics: place-based learning (home learning for primary grades), project-based learning, and assessment. These will be done remotely and we’ll leverage all of our schools to make the learning more robust and relevant. It’s important that we introduce this learning right after the school year ends because the questions are still fresh in their minds and we’ll be providing them ideas for planning. We hope that we’ve chosen topics that can improve instruction whether we use remote learning or not.

As we flesh these programs out, I’ll share our topics and resources. As you struggle to make this school year worthwhile for students, I’m reminded of Deal & Peterson’s metaphor of the bifocal principal—keeping our eyes down to read the story in front of us while also looking ahead for what’s around the corner.