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April 2021

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While we strive to pack as much information as possible into this magazine, the fact is that there are many things that just won't fit. Our editors write new stories daily and these are all available for free online.

Here are the 5 most popular recent articles, guest columns, and resources for education leaders.

How SAT shifts will impact college access and equity

Critics have long argued the high-stakes tests are an unreliable and inequitable judge of students' academic abilities (bit.ly/SATshifts)

6 key ingredients to creating an outdoor classroom

For a \$5,000 per school budget, here are the top outdoor classroom features districts should prioritize (bit.ly/classoutdoor)

Professional organizations for teachers and K-12 leaders

DA offers an alphabetical list of education organizations with links to their websites (<http://bit.ly/DAorglist>)

4 tips for handling teaching evaluations during COVID

While administrators might be tempted to relax evaluations during the pandemic, teachers deserve attention and candid feedback to grow and be successful (bit.ly/COVIDevals)

5 principles anchor work of new anti-racism education center

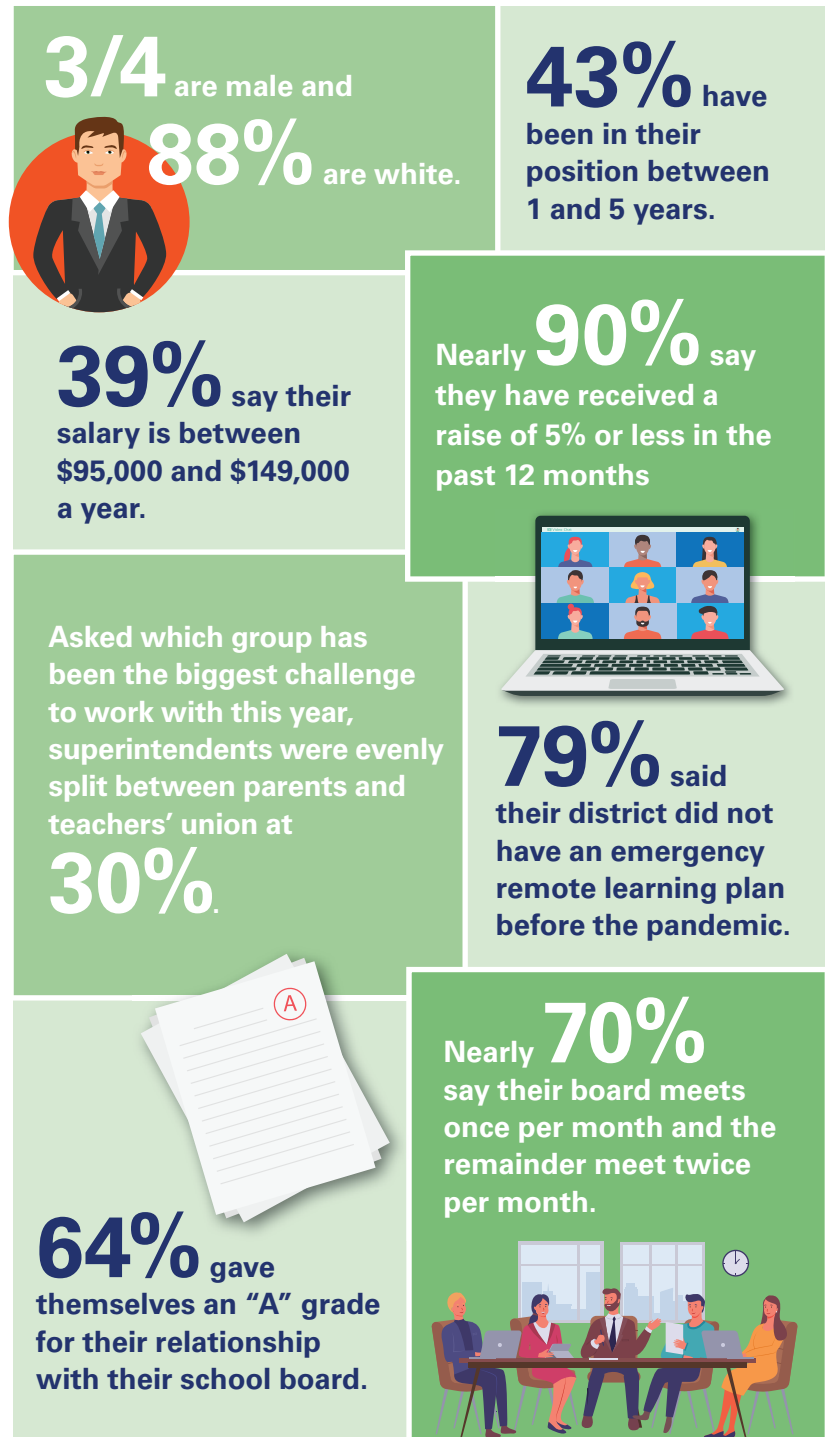
Center for Antiracist Education guides teachers in finding more inclusive instructional resources (bit.ly/antiracist-education)

I hope you'll come visit us online and hit the Subscribe button to sign up for our daily and weekly newsletters to stay up to date on the latest developments in K-12 education.

— Eric Weiss, executive editor

Survey says!

More than 250 superintendents who responded to DA's annual survey reveal that a majority have been in their position for more than 5 years, and an even larger majority are white and male. Key findings:





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News roundup: Staying in-person and saving social studies

4 rural districts teamed up to remain in-person

Rural school districts face a range of challenges but one advantage for many of these small systems has been an ability to remain open for in-person instruction throughout the pandemic.

Leaders of four small districts in rural western Wisconsin found additional strength by collaborating around their response to the pandemic as part of the Trempealeau Valley Cooperative.

For example, students from the Independence School District, the smallest of the systems, participate in Whitehall School District's food and consumer science courses and in the Blair-Taylor School District's welding program. Independence, in turn, is sharing a health teacher with Whitehall

The size of the co-op has also allowed the leaders to develop more substantial partnerships with businesses and higher



Rural systems, such as the Blair-Taylor School District in Wisconsin, have been able to keep students in classrooms all school year.

education in the region, says Lance Bagstad, district administrator of the fourth system, the School District of Arcadia.

How to save social studies

Civics and history education at every grade level must be rebuilt, say a group

of scholars who have developed extensive inquiry-based, social studies guidelines for a diverse and democratic society.

The Educating for American Democracy Roadmap and Report (bit.ly/3sTQ90F) is a response to decreased investments in social studies and the increasing polarization in American society and politics, its creators say.

The Jan. 6 attack at the U.S. Capitol only heightened the urgency to ensure students do more than memorize facts a how a representative democracy work.

“The roadmap really asks that learners have a chance to shift from breadth to depth, to pursue lines of inquiry,” says Danielle Allen, director of Harvard University's Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics. The roadmap is not a set of standards or a curriculum, but a guide for states and districts to beef up their own social studies standards. **DA**

—Matt Zalaznick

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COVID-19 Impact Survey for Students



The COVID-19 Impact Survey for Students was developed to gather more information about the impact of COVID-19 as it relates to the pandemic-driven modified learning environments of their school systems. The responses to these research-based questions can assist administrators in making data driven decisions about their limited resources and may help in obtaining additional resources and grant funding for students with the most needs.

“During this time of uncertainty and change, it is especially important to understand how children's and adolescents' educational and social experiences, as well as their physical and mental health are being impacted.”

- Dennis Reidy, PhD & COVID-19 Analyst

The survey gathers information about categories such as:

- Students' preference for online vs. in-classroom education
- Reasons for student absences
- Feelings of safety and stress
- Access to technology
- Academic achievement
- The learning environment at home
- Interpersonal relationships
- Mental and physical health
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THE SHIFTING SAT

As colleges drop the exam, can the College Board reduce the burden on students and make higher education more accessible?

BY MATT ZALAZNICK

COVID further eroded the SAT's role in college admissions, giving more ammunition to critics who have long argued the high-stakes tests are an unreliable and inequitable judge of students' academic abilities.

Because high school juniors have been unable to take the test over the last year, more colleges and universities have joined institutions that had previously

made SATs and ACTs optional over concerns about fairness and effectiveness.

Perhaps in response to COVID's disruptions, the College Board earlier this year eliminated the SAT's subject tests and the optional essay and vowed to give students more flexibility in taking the high-stakes exam.

"I don't think getting rid of subject tests will change people's opinion about

the SAT," says Morgan Polikoff, an associate professor of education at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education. "I do think it's a good thing to remove barriers to college entry that aren't related to subsequent success."

Those changes, however, won't do much to make the SAT more equitable, says Polikoff, an expert in testing, K-12

education policy and the Common Core.

“All measures in college admission are in one way or another stacked in favor of more advantaged white and Asian students, and more affluent applicants,” he says.

The biggest and most immediate factor in reducing the influence of high-stakes placement tests may be the unlikelihood that college administrators will reinstate the exams after making them optional or eliminating them altogether, Polikoff says.

On the other hand, state systems, such as the University of California, that plan to drop the SATs and ACTs, intend to create new tests. But, Polikoff cautions, any new exams will face the same questions of equity and accuracy that plagued the old high-stakes tests.

“Once you’ve taken something away, putting it back is quite difficult,” he says. “Any school trying to go back from that would probably take a lot of heat.”

Shifting the knowledge narrative

As the SAT’s influence wanes, colleges and high schools could place more emphasis on students’ performance in AP courses and on AP tests—which are also administered by the College Board, says Casey Cobb, a professor of educational policy at the University of Connecticut’s Neag School of Education.

“I don’t think the SAT is going away any time soon,” Cobb says. “But AP subject matter tests could contribute to a better system because they’re classroom-based and are more about day-to-day learning.”

District administrators should therefore prepare to accommodate increased interest in AP courses and tests in the coming years, Cobb says. K-12 educators will also have to guide high school students in compiling digital portfolios and developing other new methods of demonstrating their readiness for college, Cobb says.

Compared to the ACT or SAT, these methods could also help students better identify their own strengths and interests.

High stakes overhaul: 3 SAT changes

Earlier this year, the College Board revamped its SAT test. Here’s the organization’s explanation:

- **Discontinuing subject tests:** Low-income students and students of color have “widespread” access to AP courses and tests, which makes SAT subject tests unnecessary.
- **Discontinuing the optional essay:** There are other ways for students to demonstrate their mastery of essay writing. Meanwhile, the tasks on the SAT reading and writing and language tests remain the most effective and predictive parts of the test.
- **A more flexible exam:** The College Board is consulting with K-12 and higher education leaders—and “making substantial investments”—to innovate and adapt in the wake of COVID’s disruptions.

“I would encourage district administrators to shift narratives as much as they can, from using tests as entrance requirements to more informative and diagnostic information in terms of how students are growing and learning in a particular field,” Cobb says.

Colleges’ admissions boards would also have to give more weight to other factors like grade-point averages, the courses students took in high school, extra-curricular activities and other measures, Polikoff adds.

“Those are all things that could just as easily as test contribute to inequities in the college admissions process,” he says.

Just one piece of the equity puzzle

Colleges didn’t just use the tests to gauge applicants’ academic abilities. The exams also provided lists of students to whom admissions officers can send recruiting materials, Polikoff says.

From this perspective, cancelling the tests could actually disadvantage some students.

“I wonder how some kids will find out about college, particularly less resourced kids or kids in schools where there are fewer counselors,” he says. “We’d still have to make sure kids who are college eligible have access to quality information.”

Also, high scores on SATs and ACTs can help more selective colleges identify underrepresented students.

Ultimately, even eliminating the SATs and ACTs would have a marginal impact on making college access more equitable.

Ample research, for example, has also shown that Black, brown and less-wealthy students are tracked into lower-level courses, Polikoff says.

“I hope this is part of a broader agenda to try to improve systems and structures that contribute to inequities,” he says. “Standardized tests do contribute on the margins to inequities. All the other systems and structures do as well, and I hope we’re continuing to interrogate those.” **DA**

Matt Zalaznick is DA’s senior writer.



Tutoring to the rescue?

AN EXTRA BOOST: A Minnesota Reading Corps tutor works with an elementary school student pre-COVID.

Tutoring programs embedded in schools are gaining momentum as a highly effective and equitable model for helping children recover from COVID-era learning loss

By Matt Zalaznick

The recovery from COVID-era learning loss could last awhile for some students and school systems.

To speed the journey, more district leaders are enhancing everyday school instruction with formalized tutoring programs that experts increasingly see as the most effective and equitable way to drive student growth.

“The pandemic has shined a light on the acute needs of millions of public school students who have not been well-served by traditional group instruction, as evidenced by longstanding and large educational opportunity gaps across race and socio-economic lines” says Matthew A. Kraft, an associate professor of education and economics at Brown University who is considered a leading voice on tutoring.

In a new working paper, Kraft and his Brown University colleague co-author Grace Falken called tutoring “one

of the most effective education interventions ever studied.”

“We’re thinking about doing this within the structure of the public school system as a way to democratize and equalize access,” Kraft says. “Failing to do so means that the status quo persists, and the status quo is that if you have the resources, you can afford tutoring in the private market.”

What national tutoring could look like

Kraft and other tutoring advocates are now trying to figure out how to offer effective, frequent and individualized instruction at scale for students who most need additional support.

Of course, Kraft has a vision for just such a national system and the large numbers of tutors that would be required. It starts with training AmeriCorps volunteers who’ve graduated college to tutor high school students.

College students could also be hired part-time to tutor middle schoolers, and high school high achievers could tutor elementary school students, Kraft suggests.

District leaders would then have to ensure that tutors had time to work with teachers to align curriculum and support classroom instruction, Kraft says.

Establishing such a system could take some time. But district leaders could jumpstart the process by tapping every adult—from the central office administrators to teachers to the bus drivers—to mentor a small group of students.

This would give all students a caring adult to check in with, he says.

“We shouldn’t think narrowly about tutoring as only improving core academic skills,” Kraft says. “We need to see this as an opportunity to develop social-emotional learning, and to provide more support to kids who were already experiencing real trauma before the pandemic.”

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Tutoring to the rescue?

Taking the burden off teachers

The recovery from COVID learning loss will further tax teachers who, even pre-pandemic and particularly in under-resourced districts, faced challenges in supporting all learners adequately, says Katharine B. Stevens, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

A well-integrated tutoring program would take pressure off teachers to repair COVID's disruptions on their own, says Stevens, who recently posted a blog titled "We need a national tutoring program to avert educational catastrophe." (<https://bit.ly/2N8OrcD>)

"Teachers are coming back to extremely difficult jobs," she says. "We cannot expect them to be miracle workers and put the pieces back together on their own in their classrooms with their doors shut."

Tutoring can be a "game changer" in providing students with more personalized support in one-on-one or small group sessions. As a model, she points to the National Tutoring Programme recently launched in England.

Schools in the U.K. can now access subsidized tutoring from a list of pre-screened providers, known as "Tuition Partners," who offer individualized instruction to children virtually and in person.

The program also places trained college graduates of all ages in schools as full-time "Academic Mentors" who work with students one-on-one and in small-group instruction, focusing on the most disadvantaged children.

The U.S. could tap the private tutoring sector and programs like AmeriCorps to create a national tutoring program. One model is the Minnesota-based Reading Corps, which places full-time AmeriCorps tutors in low-performing elementary schools in 12 states and D.C. The organization also has a Math Corps in five states.

Keys to the Reading and Math Corps initiatives are training tutors rigorously and regularly to work with a school's educators to support classroom instruction, says Anne Sinclair, the Reading Corps' chief learning officer.

The organization deploys tutors for free but asks schools to provide a district

coach to help develop caseloads of students and fit tutoring sessions into the building schedule. Tutoring regimens will also align with a school's Response to Intervention of Multi-Tiered System of Supports intervention programs, Sinclair says.

The tutors embed into classrooms and meet with students daily or a few times a week, depending on the subject and age-level.

Randomized control trials conducted over the past several years have shown that Reading and Math Corps students outperform classmates who have not received tutoring, Sinclair says.

"It's going to take many different kinds of efforts to improve outcomes after COVID," Sinclair says. "We're one way to reach kids who may need a boost in literacy and math."

How tutoring keeps students engaged

When administrators in Kentucky's Jefferson County Public Schools realized a return to in-person instruction remained unlikely in fall 2020, they decided to give students access to nearly 24/7 tutoring online.

The large district, headquartered in Louisville, contracted with a company called FEV to offer free tutoring to students in grades 3-12. Students can schedule time with a tutor or seek help on-demand.

Because neither students nor the tutors use cameras or microphones to protect privacy, all questions are asked via a chat box. Screens can be shared, and documents can be uploaded, and a whiteboard feature allows tutors to do demonstrations.

The sessions are also recorded so students and parents can go back and review. Students can rate the tutors and leave comments about the sessions, says Staci Eddleman, the district's director of federal programs.

The program is particularly effective when students have questions stemming from asynchronous classes, and during times of day when they are unable to connect with the teacher, such as later in the evening.

"We know this is hard on our students and families, and we want to keep students engaged," Eddleman says. "We don't

Who should be a tutor?

Administrators should recognize that tutoring requires a different set of skills than classroom teaching, says Katharine B. Stevens, a visiting scholar at the American Enterprise Institute.

People who don't feel comfortable in front of a room full of children may excel at working with students on-on-one or in small groups.

And many teachers "stressed and exhausted" from the COVID experience would likely appreciate having another adult in class to connect with children during the pandemic recovery, Stevens says.

"It seems unlikely that many children are going to get back on their feet without feeling like there's somebody on their side," she says. "Whatever gaps there were before COVID, they've only gotten bigger, and we don't yet know the emotional struggles we can expect."

want them to get frustrated and stuck on something if they're not going to see their teacher for a few days."

The district also sends 30 substitutes each day to community learning hubs where students can go to connect to Wi-Fi and do classwork.

The district has tapped a local non-profit, Evolve502, to connect the substitutes and the learning hubs. Evolve 502 also works with the district to ensure students at the hubs get breakfast and lunch and that staff have access to personal protective equipment.

This community initiative should have an impact even after the pandemic is under control, as the district hopes to expand the learning hubs in the coming years and involve more organizations, says Charles C. Davis Jr., Evolve502's director of comprehensive services.

"We recognize things will never be the same post-COVID," Davis says "This is one of the better things that won't be same—how the district works with the community. It will be a much closer relationship." **DA**

Matt Zalaznick is DA's senior writer.



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5 Steps to Achieve IT Stabilization

COVID-19 forced every school system's IT department to quickly react, disrupting many strategic initiatives and requiring administrators and staff to take on a "firefighter" mentality when it comes to support. As districts begin to plan for how to stabilize their networks and infrastructures, this 5-step IT stabilization strategy can help your school or district to get back on track.

1 Create a current state assessment

The purpose of the assessment is to determine whether the existing state of the technology network infrastructure effectively supports the current and future academic and operational goals of the school district. The foundation of the assessment will be the requirement for continued support of hybrid learning environments.

The scope of the assessment should include: network topology, redundancy, connectivity, network devices, LAN, WAN, wireless, security, cabling and communication. The assessment should also review how the technology department monitors, forecasts, and develops trending analysis.

In order to complete the network infrastructure assessment, partner with a vendor who can provide expertise in the following areas:

- Field data collection
- Document review
- Architecture review
- Standards review
- Review operational support processes & procedures
- Review equipment configuration
- Interview key staff

2 Prioritize assessment findings

Upon completion of the network infrastructure assessment, a gap analysis should be conducted. The purpose of a gap analysis is to determine what specific steps must be taken to achieve a desired goal. The gap analysis will compare observations and recommendations from the current state assessment with the desired, expected performance of the network infrastructure in a hybrid learning environment.

When the gap analysis is complete, the school district IT leadership and staff should assign a priority for each of the gaps identified. The prioritization process will consider dependencies, risk, complexity, cost, and time. Priorities should be assigned a high, medium or low status.



3 Develop an implementation road map

Once the assessment gaps have been identified and prioritized, an implementation road map should be created. The road map will define the necessary steps for implementing, upgrading, or enhancing the network infrastructure, focused specifically on initiatives that can be completed in 12-18 months.

The implementation road map will outline:

- Overarching strategic objectives
- Major steps planned for achieving each objective
- Major milestones and timing for successful implementation

Additionally, the implementation road map will serve as a communication tool to articulate the "WHY" this work needs to be completed.

4 Develop a strategic plan

Use the implementation road map to develop a strategic plan. The strategic plan will identify budget, timelines and necessary resources (both internally and externally). The strategic plan will help to ensure the IT department and key stakeholders are working toward the same goals and completion of the road map.

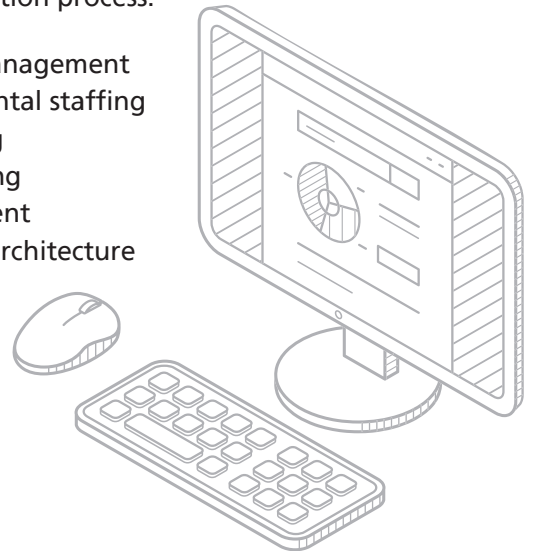
Key elements of the strategic plan should include:

- Scoping statement
- Staff/Resource requirements
- Budget
- Requirements
- Schedule
- Procurement strategy
- Communications plan

5 Implement the strategic plan

Upon completion of the strategic plan, district leadership should begin implementation, in partnership with any solution providers, who may provide the following support in the implementation process:

- Project management
- Supplemental staffing
- Consulting
- Engineering
- Procurement
- Network architecture design



“COVID-19 has caused a fundamental disruption in how education technology is used in K-12 schools,” says Richard Nedwich, global director of education at CommScope. “School districts have been forced to evaluate their current technology infrastructure. As we enter the reopening phase and move closer to resuming fully in-person learning, this 5-step strategy can help any district to make the transition seamless.”

CommScope provides the expertise, solutions and technologies that can help your district implement this 5-step IT stabilization strategy. To learn more, go to www.commscope.com/da/steps-to-public-funding

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Paving the road

to recovery

How Biden administration policies—and Congress and the courts—will steer K-12 into the post-COVID era

By Matt Zalaznick

The good news is that the school districts will have an “avalanche of money” coming their way in the latest COVID relief bill.

The hard part will be spending it wisely, says Michael J. Petrilli, president of the Thomas B. Fordham Institute think tank.

President Joe Biden’s American Rescue Plan Act, and the \$130 billion going to schools, represents the centerpiece of his administration’s education agenda, Petrilli says.

“By the time this money hits school districts, there’s a good chance the pandemic is going to be behind us,” he says. “These resources will be spent over multiple years to address the unfinished learning, the mental health needs and other challenges kids are going to have.”

But the massive amount of stimulus funding that appears headed to schools could create a competition for resources that could favor more affluent schools, says Julia Martin, legislative director for the education-focused law firm, Brustein & Manasevit.

For instance, schools with more resources may hire up teachers, nurses and school psychologists. This would leave lower-income districts scrambling to fill these positions that will be critical to helping students and communities recover from COVID, Martin says.

“There are only a finite number of these folks,” she says.

How to extend high-quality instruction

If combatting learning loss is a priority, policymakers and education leaders should consider creating large-scale tutoring and summer school programs that could remain in place long beyond COVID, adds Thomas Toch, director of the FutureEd think tank at Georgetown University.

Administrators can use the funds to leverage technology to innovate in the classroom by, for instance, redeploying teachers. In some school systems, for instance, the top third grade math teacher provides virtual lessons for the entire districts. Other teachers then work one-

on-one with students to provide additional support, Toch says.

“School officials have wanted to get their best teachers in front of as many students as possible,” Toch says. “Now, with technology you can do that in a way that could increase the amount of high-quality instruction kids get.”

Students who have fallen behind will be ill-served if they are only offered remedial classes, Toch says.

That could require providing multiple periods of math or reading in a single day. In some districts, administrators have reassigned art, music and gym teachers, and other specialists, to accelerate instruction in core subjects.

“You don’t want to teach 2nd grade math to 5th graders for several months,” Toch says. “What you need is to add more instructional time so you’re catching them up.”

While adding time to the 2021-22 school year and lengthening the school day would, of course, require salary increases for teachers and other staff, Petrilli cautions education leaders not

Modernizing transportation systems helps district to improve efficiency and reduce costs

Honeoye Falls-Lima CSD is seeing a variety of benefits from its partnership with Transfinder

When Bill Harvey became Director of Transportation and Security at Honeoye Falls-Lima CSD (HF-L) in 2012, he was tasked with finding ways to modernize the district's transportation systems. The district is located outside Rochester, New York, and serves approximately 2,137 students.

Harvey has had a variety of roles for several school districts over his 37-year career, including bus mechanic and driver, fleet supervisor and transportation director.

Improving bus routing

One of the first areas Harvey looked at when he became director was the bus routing system. "The district was using bus routing software that was very limited in its capabilities," he says. Most processes were intensely paper based, and what little transportation data they had access to was kept in paper spreadsheets and binders.

"For a process like creating routes, printing out papers and mailing them to each household would take us a week," he says. "The school board would ask basic questions about what we were spending, our mileage, what we spent on field trips, or what our average bus ride time was, and I couldn't answer. We didn't have the data to even know what we could improve, or how."

Fortunately, Harvey knew of a solution that could solve these challenges, having used the Transfinder platform in previous districts.

Transfinder provides a variety of intelligent routing, scheduling and fleet maintenance solutions to optimize school district transportation logistics.



Parent access and fleet management

The Infofinder i solution provides parents with a way to access the system and enter their address to see their bus route. "There were times when the volume of phone calls from parents with questions or route corrections would overwhelm our office," Harvey says. "Now, we don't get any calls, just a few questions via email, which are easily answered. It's much easier for parents and

our office staff."

The district also uses the Servicefinder solution for fleet and inventory management. "I maintain a 10-year bus replacement plan that I update every year. I need accurate data to make my recommendations. Now with Servicefinder, I can analyze our acquisition costs, cost per mile, residual value and total cost of ownership for each bus," he says.

Overall, Harvey says Transfinder has made a big impact in the district. "It has reduced our costs significantly, and we've been able to automate or eliminate many manual and cumbersome processes."

Harvey says the district is looking forward to implementing additional Transfinder solutions. "Our goal is to continue to find ways to improve this department and go to the next level."

Transfinder offers over a dozen different solutions for different aspects of school transportation, so districts can choose based on their needs. HF-L implemented Transfinder's Routefinder PLUS, Servicefinder and Infofinder i solutions.

Intelligent routing

By using the Routefinder PLUS solution, the department not only created bus routes that were more consistent and efficient, but Harvey says he had access to a wealth of routing data he didn't have before. "I now know our average ride time, mileage and ride time for each individual route, and much more," he says. "Before we had Transfinder it was difficult or impossible to know any of this information."

Similarly, the processes for field trips or athletic events once required a lot of back-and-forth of approval forms to different offices, often causing confusion or delays. "We revamped the entire process through Transfinder. Now approvals are done through email notifications, and everything goes much faster. We automated much of the process and did away with a lot of the paperwork," Harvey says.

transfinder

Paving the road to recovery

to spend the money on long-term obligations.

Large-scale salary increases, for instance, might not be sustainable after the relief funds run out. “There will be pressure from teachers unions and other groups but this is a one-time infusion and school systems should treat it like that,” Petrilli says.

Leaders will also need to devote funds to hiring or contracting for more counselors to support students’ mental health needs, he says.

Petrilli also expects Congress will have built in a provision to ensure more funding goes to schools that have been disproportionately affected by COVID, including low-income students and students of color.

“The only way any of this stuff is going to work is if you’ve got other basics in place,” Petrilli says. “If you’re a school system that doesn’t have a comprehensive curriculum and high-quality instructional materials, investing in those would make sense also.”

Challenging test questions

When it comes to testing, the flexibility and waivers offered in the Biden administration’s recent guidance will not be the end of the post-pandemic assessment debate, Martin says.

Among the biggest questions will be how reliable data generated by any test administered in the coming months, particularly online tests considering many students still don’t have adequate internet access or comfortable home learning environments, Martin says.

There is also substantial resistance to using any COVID-era test data for school or teacher accountability.

“In the longer term, are we going to look back and say this is good data or not good data?” Martin says. “This conversation is not going to be over anytime soon regardless of what each individual state and districts decide to do about assessments.”

Still, state-testing has a valuable place in COVID recovery, says Robin Lake, director of the Center on Reinventing Public Education at the University of Washington Bothell.



Gender identity: There’s more clarity on discrimination than on sports

Gender-identity in schools will receive lots of high-level attention this year.

The Department of Education, Congress and courts all will weigh in on protections against discrimination and who can play on which high school sports teams, says Julia Martin, legislative director for the education-focused law firm, Brustein & Manasevit.

A recent Supreme Court labor decision, *Bostock v. Clayton County*, found that protections against discrimination based on sex also extend to gender identity.

While that could settle many issues impacting K-12, such as name and bathroom use, the questions of which students can play on which athletic teams—particularly girls’ and

women’s squads—will likely remain a challenging issue for school administrators.

While the Biden administration may offer guidance, a bill currently before Congress would define sex as solely biological for athletics purposes—meaning students could only join teams that correlate with the gender assigned at birth, Martin says.

And there are various court cases that could also impact the issue, Martin says.

“Congress or the courts could make decisions that override any policies the administration sets,” Martin says. “Or they may set different policies in different contexts that shift fairly quickly and maybe multiple times.”

Some states, for instance, are scaling back tests to zero-in on core skills and concepts so teachers can be sure they’re using their time effectively, Lake says.

Data showing the impact on students could also convince voters to support increases in education funding. Test results can also drive district priorities and, if administrators are transparent with the scores, build trust with parents and communities, Lake says.

“More than anything, COVID exposed inequities, and rigidities in the system that we knew they were there, but became really problematic in a crisis,” Lake says. “I’m excited when I hear district leaders talk about how we can rebuild in ways that are fundamentally better than what we had before.”

How to rebuild community

Outside COVID, the Biden administration appears likely to bring back Obama-era policies on issues such as discipline, with a focus on restorative justice practices over suspensions, says Petrilli, at the Fordham Institute.

“I worry that even though it comes from the right impulse that it could end

up making it hard for school districts to put in place discipline policies that really promote learning and recovery,” he says.

Educators may face an increase in disruptive behavior as students who have struggled most during the pandemic return to classroom as schools reopen. This will negatively impact the learning environment for other students, Petrilli says.

“There are going to be kids who come back with enormous and real trauma and they’re going to act some of that out in schools,” Petrilli says.

Superintendents and their teams should also consider devoting funds to social-emotional learning and other mental health interventions. Many students will need to recover a sense of belonging after months of isolation, adds Toch, of FutureEd.

“You don’t want to put the academic pedal to the metal on day one when school starts back,” Toch says. “You want to ensure you’ve rebuilt the sense of community that’s so important in successful schools.” **DA**

Matt Zalaznick is DA’s senior writer.

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Keynotes



5 ways to overcome compassion fatigue in K-12 education

Unaddressed compassion fatigue leads to anxiety, trouble concentrating and desire to leave one's position.

Laurie Cure, DA guest columnist

As the world continues to deal with COVID, healthcare workers, teachers, parents, administrators and others are feeling the heavy weight of burnout and compassion fatigue.

While we don't normally think of educators as the most susceptible to compassion fatigue, the demands of the field often lead to similar outcomes as those in healthcare.

Teachers are under a tremendous workload in normal times; add a pandemic into the mix and educators are saddled with the many needs of students.

While we often use the two terms interchangeably, there is a notable difference between the two. Burnout is considered reactionary and usually occurs gradually over time.

Compassion fatigue, on the other hand, has a sudden onset and results from increased exposure to suffering and taking on the pain of others. For many professions, COVID-19 has created the perfect storm for the emergence of deep, pervasive levels of compassion fatigue.

Moving back and forth between in person and remote learning, supporting children's many needs and ensuring the health and safety of students has impacted teachers in a profound way. Unaddressed compassion fatigue leads to anxiety, struggles to concentrate, feelings of isolation, loss of interest, exhaustion, lack of sleep and desire to leave one's job.

While this year has made compassion fatigue difficult to avoid, here are five tips to manage it for burnt out educators:

1. Reflect on where you are and what you need

Take an assessment. The Professional Quality of Life Scale offers a self-

assessment to determine your level of compassion satisfaction, burnout and secondary trauma. This can help in understanding your risk level and current state.

For many, a simple solution for combatting compassion fatigue is reengaging in the activities that bring us energy.

2. Set healthy boundaries

It is easier to set boundaries outside of a pandemic, when you are not being asked to take on larger workloads and there is less support available. When working long hours and taking on additional responsibilities seems like the only option, assess and prioritize your level of fatigue and the alternatives available to you. Setting boundaries and changing the way you work is necessary to prevent harm to others and yourself.

3. Cultivate a growth mindset

Successful people embrace optimism and possibility thinking. Psychologists often refer to the need for individuals to cultivate positivity and a growth mindset to live a fulfilling life. The way we view situations, events and our circumstances shape how successfully we are able to navigate life's challenges. A growth mindset is one that allows us to view talents and potential as things that can be learned and developed as opposed to a fixed mindset which says that these abilities are natural and innate. When we embrace a belief that we can grow and improve, we experience greater degrees of empowerment and commitment to our work and life.

4. Practice self-care

Take care of yourself first. Make sure

you are eating and sleeping well. Plan your meals so the busyness of the day does not overwhelm you. Give yourself uninterrupted breaks and create support structures at home and at work to help you rest when needed.

Finally, the most important part of self-care with compassion fatigue is self-compassion. You are doing your best, and while it may not feel good enough, it's all anyone can ask of you.

5. Seek out support

The natural tendency with compassion fatigue is to isolate and withdraw. Actively resist this urge and be sure to find time to meet/speak with friends and family. During traumatic events, we always recommend debriefs and this is one big trauma. Find time to debrief on a regular basis even if it feels like you are strong and expressing the same thing over and over. Seek out your pastor, counselor or a leadership coach to assist.

Educators devote so much time and energy to the success of their students that compassion fatigue is often inevitable. If your work is still bringing you value and satisfaction, continue seeking ways to build on your values and what is most important in your work. With the right mindset and support system, we can overcome the feelings of compassion fatigue and burnout. **DA**

*Laurie Cure, CEO of management consulting firm Innovative Connections, is a consultant offering strategic planning, organizational development, talent management and HR support for organizational effectiveness. Cure is the author of *Leading Without Fear*.*



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