9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”
(*Because “Normal” Wasn’t That Great to Begin With)
This has been hard. Really hard.
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As a lethal pandemic, economic and physical insecurity, and violent conflict ravaged the world, democracy's defenders sustained heavy new losses in their struggle against authoritarian foes, shifting the international balance in favor of tyranny.
We are all exhausted.
Exclusive: Exhausted teachers 'pushed to the brink'

The demands of remote education this term have left teachers struggling physically and mentally, Tes survey shows

Catherine Lough
13th February 2021 at 8:00am

Which of the following best describes your own health and wellbeing this term?

Answered: 7,081 Skipped: 1,337

- I feel great 1% (69)
- I feel physically and mentally on the brink 17% (1181)
- I feel completely fine 7% (470)
- I'm just about coping 30% (2108)
- I'm drained and exhausted 45% (3213)
Should every Colorado kid get a mental health exam after enduring coronavirus? It won’t be easy.

Rep. Dafna Michaelson Jenet, a Commerce City Democrat, isn’t sure how to accomplish the logistics, but she thinks her idea is a matter of school safety and statewide health.
“Things are not getting worse, they are getting uncovered. We must hold each other tight and continue to pull back the veil.”

adrienne maree brown
Arundhati Roy: ‘The pandemic is a portal’ | Free to read

The novelist on how coronavirus threatens India — and what the country, and the world, should do next
“Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And ready to fight for it.”
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"The most important lesson from 2020 is the reminder that deep and powerful learning only happens when it’s relevant, real-world, collaborative, driven by inquiry and passion, and shared transparently.”

9 BIG Questions Ebook
If you don't like the road you're walking, start paving another one.
A new school project

Adaptive Change Community Learning Capacity Equity Well-being Evidence
LEADING ON PRINCIPLE:
A COLLECTIVE COMMITMENT

ADAPTIVE CHANGE
“WE USE FEARLESS INQUIRY TO CONTINUALLY INTERROGATE AND SHED EMBEDDED PRACTICE THAT DOES NOT AMPLIFY AND INSPIRE PROFOUND LEARNING THROUGHOUT OUR SCHOOL COMMUNITIES.”

CAPACITY
“WE DEVELOP THE CAPACITY IN OUR PEOPLE TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT HIGH-QUALITY AND SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS IN A TIME OF RAPID AND UNMITIGATED CHANGE.”

LEARNING
“WE ENSURE DYNAMIC, ENGAGING, IMPACTFUL, AND JOYFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES OWNED AND DRIVEN BY LEARNERS.”

COMMUNITY
“WE CO-CREATE CARING, ENGAGED, AND INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES, CLEARLY DEFINED BY A COMMON LEARNING LANGUAGE, AND A COMMITMENT TO SHARED LEARNING VALUES.”

WELL-BEING
“WE CO-CREATE A CULTURE THAT NURTURES THE INTELLECTUAL, SOCIAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL, SPIRITUAL, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND OCCUPATIONAL WELL-BEING OF ALL COMMUNITY MEMBERS.”

EVIDENCE
“WE REJECT OVERDEPENDENCE ON NARROW METHODS OF ASSESSMENT. ALL LEARNERS AND SCHOOLS MUST HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO DEMONSTRATE PROGRESS USING RICH AND DIVERSE DATA AND METHODS.”

EQUITY
“WE COMMIT TO IDENTIFY, CONFRONT, AND DISMANTLE STRUCTURES AND SYSTEMS OF INEQUITY, TO EXAMINE OUR PRIVILEGE, AND TAKE ACTIONS TO INCREASE JUSTICE AND ENSURE BELONGING.”
The problem with “normal.”
“In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.”

George Orwell
So, what is “normal” in schools anyway?
So, what is “normal” in schools anyway? (Truthfully)
"Normal" in schools is:
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* kids learning how to get a good grade over everything else.
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* silos of knowledge that rarely connect.
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* a lack of relevance to the modern world.
* White explorers, scientists, authors, and histories.
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*anxious, stressed, depressed children.
*an increasing illiteracy to recognize misinformation.
*self-worth as measured by numbers.
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* anxious, stressed, depressed children.
* an increasing illiteracy to recognize misinformation.
* self-worth as measured by numbers.
* power over as opposed to power with.
So...
So...

...why do we want to go back to that?
9 BIG QUESTIONS
SCHOOLS MUST ANSWER
TO AVOID GOING
"BACK TO NORMAL"

(*BECAUSE "NORMAL" WASN'T THAT GREAT TO BEGIN WITH*)

BY WILL RICHARDSON AND HOMA TAVANGAR
CO-FOUNDERS OF THE BIG QUESTIONS INSTITUTE

bit.ly/bqi9ebook
"Questions that have the power to make a difference are ones that engage people in an intimate way, confront them with their freedom, and invite them to co-create a future possibility."

Peter Block, Community
9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
What is learning?
Where is the power?
Why do we _____?
Who is unheard?
Are we literate?
Are we ok?
Are we connected?
What’s next?

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9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
9 BIG Questions Schools Must Answer to Avoid Going “Back to Normal”

What is sacred?
What is learning?
Audit activities/questions:

- Convene a diverse working group to create and articulate a definition of learning.

- How do you personally learn most effectively and powerfully? What conditions exist when you are learning most effectively?

- Ask a random sampling of teachers, students, parents, and other members of the community to define learning. What do their answers tell you about coherence and clarity regarding learning? What are the implications for how students experience your school?

- Along with creating a clear and coherent definition of learning, make a list of the conditions that will foster that kind of learning. Are they consistently present in your school?

- Would your school community describe learning as an event or as an ongoing practice? What are the implications of each?
Towards a new normal:

- Instead of “students” and “teachers,” refer to everyone in the school as “learners.”

- Commit to filtering every decision through your definition. Ask regularly, “Does this promote more powerful learning experiences as we have defined them?”

- Compile stories of students and teachers who are learning by your definition inside and outside of school, and share them regularly with your community.

- Increase the freedom that students (and teachers) have to learn on their own terms wherever possible.

- Make sure that students understand how what’s being asked of them aligns with your definition of learning.
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Audit activities/questions:

- Review U.S. Department of Education Office of Civil Rights data on discipline for your school district (search here) or comparable schools if you are not in the database. Note the disparities by race, gender, ability. What are the patterns?

- What is the demographic composition of students assigned to special education? To honors, advanced, and gifted programs? Does this reflect the community you serve?

- How are you nurturing relationships with underserved students, and seeing their actual stories as the data that drives decisions?

- Which parents are engaged in volunteering, fundraising, other roles? How might more parents feel welcomed to offer their service, knowledge, experience?

- Do hiring practices adequately recruit and retain diverse staff and faculty to reflect the community you serve?
Towards a new normal:

- Consider what “decolonizing education” looks like in your specific role. Who are the experts you learn from? What sources of knowledge, traditions, practices need to be questioned, added or replaced?

- Identify and collaborate with champions who share your commitment to equitable and anti-racist education - whether they work in your building, or on the other side of the world.

- Identify units of study in each grade that uplift diverse authors, scientists, innovators and thought leaders. Whose work has been overlooked in your traditional canon?

- Expand your network of diverse professional relationships well before you need to fill a leadership role. If personal networks serve as a crucial pipeline for jobs, how can we expect robust, diverse recruitment without significant, upfront effort to nurture authentic relationships?

- Take personal responsibility to learn the pernicious effects of racism – historically, systemically, emotionally. If you are not Black, consider any discomfort you might feel as a healthy start to a vital learning and reconciliation process our students deserve.
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Enjoying plowing through this great read by @willrich45 and @HomaTav @AESDelhi has taken huge strides toward defining learning, the principles, the practices for our “learners”. This work has been assisted by @CGCKevin and my amazing team of lead learners!
#aeslearning21

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BIG QUESTIONS: Found on the bulletin board of #indysschool tech leader @DonnaWeth -- look familiar, @willrich45 and @homatav? We can't wait for your keynotes at the #ATLISundaunted 2021 Annual Conference. The #ATLIS community is ready to learn from you. theatlis.org/annual-confere...

What is sacred?
What is learning?
What is power?
Who is unheard?
Are we connected?
Are we literate?
What does it mean to be a Trojan?
A framework for moving forward from this moment.
The New 3Rs for Educational Leaders
Step 1: Reflect (Past)
Step 2: Reset (Present)
Step 3: Reinvent (Future)
Who are we now?

What might we become?

Community
- Interrogating Relevance
- Examining Purpose
- Truth-telling

Individuals
- Redefining Roles
- Practices

Institutions
- Reinventing School
- Narratives

FEARLESS INQUIRY

PERSONAL GROWTH

CULTURAL CHANGE

CONTINUOUS LEARNING
Community

Individuals

Institutions
Community

Who are we now?

What might we become?

Individuals

Community

Institutions
Who are we now?

What might we become?

Individuals
- Examining Purpose
- Practices
- Redefining Roles

Community
- Truth-telling
- Creating

Institutions
Who are we now?

What might we become?

Interrogating Relevance

Truth-telling

Narratives

Reinventing School

Creating

Community

Individuals

Institutions
Who are we now?

What might we become?

Community
- Examining Purpose
- Interrogating Relevance
- Truth-telling
- Narratives
- Reinventing School
- Creating

Individuals
- Practises
- Redefining Roles
- Personal Growth

Institutions
- Cultural Change
- Continuous Learning
The Importance of Community
Who are we now?
Who are we now?

What might we become?

Community
Interrogating
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Examing
Purpose

truth-telling

Reinventing
School

Creating

Narratives

Redefining
Roles

Practices

Personal Growth

Individuals

Institutions

Cultural Change

Fearless Inquiry

Continuous Learning
We're on a Journey!

This is a moment that requires deep, fearless inquiry into the systems and practices of schools who are facing an increasingly uncertain future in which to educate our kids. We are a reflective, respectful, forward-thinking community of global educators who are willing to "go there" and discuss the difficult questions around our value and our relevance in a vastly changed world. We invite you to join us on this journey!

Scroll down to see the latest: