

Leading a School Community Through a Pandemic with Dr. Jerome Cranston PhD.

Episode 3: Facing the Fears of Hindered Learning

What fears are people experiencing?

- According to UNESCO, formalized learning has been disrupted for 1.5 billions students
- Educators, parents, and children are fearful that this will result in some sort of loss of learning and socialization
- Polls and studies have shown that parents are not only worried about their child's immediate education as a result of the pandemic, but also that this will affect their education progression for years to come
- A Huffington Post article finds that new graduates, including those from the Department of Education, feel like they will just not be ready to step into the workforce, despite completing all requirements
- Despite what students say, they may lack a certain amount of confidence in their own skills and readiness when September rolls around and they begin a new grade
- A level of fatigue is setting in, with learning from a distance as people adjust and sort through the difficulties
- The fears are not superficial perceptions, they are the realities of our circumstances

What can educators do?

1. Collaborate, collaborate, collaborate
 - Going at this alone is not going assuage fears and anxiety
 - We need to work together as a profession, and lean on each other professionally
 - Make sure to communicate with the educators in the grade level(s) ahead of your own to ensure fluidity of the students learning from one grade to another
 - If you have had to modify or truncate concepts with your class, let other teachers know this so they will be able to adapt their planning accordingly for when the next school year begins
2. Provide materials that are engaging and enjoyable, but provide an opportunity to learn
 - Think about creating a recommended reading list of ~10 books for your students that are at their relative reading and cognitive level
 - Educators would do a disservice if we do not give the students opportunities to learn
 - Continue to come at education from a practical sense - our job is to prepare students
3. Develop materials that can be managed in shorter chunks of time
 - Concise segments of work - studies have shown that 20 to 30 blocks of time leads to better retention and limits fatigue
 - Try not to just lecture at the students
 - Online mediums, such as ZOOM, can be exhausting if you are not used to it

4. Create activities that provide for a sense of mastery
 - Build success feedback mechanisms into the challenges
 - Think in terms of interactive games and video games
 - Based on the notion of achieving a level of mastery and then moving to the next level - MASTERY → CHALLENGE → ADVANCEMENT
 - They provide immediate feedback
 - Keep it curricularly relevant
5. Remember that social distance does not mean social isolation
 - Continue to stress and remember the importance of inclusion, acceptance, and equity as values in programming
 - Not without their fair share of trauma, this group of students going through this will be a strong and resilient bunch
 - The onus is on educators to make sure these students are as ready for the next grade as the ones they taught last year were
 - It won't be easy, but take it as a challenge