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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Breakthrough Leadership* by Alan M. Blankstein and Marcus J. Newsome. In this excerpt, the authors provide recommendations for the first one hundred days of school in a pandemic re-entry plan.

Table 3.1 is a planning tool for you and your team to consider for the first hundred days of school.

TABLE 3.1 Pandemic Reentry Plan: Recommendations for the First 100 Days

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| <i>Phase I Preentry</i> | Organize your team to create a new vision for change | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate reopening plan with local government officials. • Clearly define shared purpose and direction for innovative change. • Develop a unifying purpose statement that the entire community can understand, including students. |
| | Listen and learn | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commit to scheduling between 50 and 100 meetings to include employees at all levels, families, and professional organizations. • Use a combination of face-to-face and digital meetings to engage education stakeholders. |
| | Review and analyze budget | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a direct correlation between successful school systems and a strong local economy. Collaborate with your local government to advocate for education and appropriate funding. In most communities, education is the largest funding allocation category. School systems employ the largest workforce, transportation system, and food service system, and maintain the most facilities. During financially challenging times, local governments make the largest percentage of budget cuts to school budgets to help fund other local government agencies like health and human services, safety, and streets. <i>Fight for fair funding for your students.</i> • The federal government has authorized funding to assist K–12 and higher education to help mitigate the negative impact of COVID-19 on schools. Use these funds in a creative and innovative way to help ensure you close equity, opportunity, and achievement gaps. • Study strategies of successful school leaders and innovators. <i>Consider breakthrough strategies from Chapter 2!</i> |
| | Engage the team in asset mapping | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As opposed to focusing on what you have lost or do not have, focus on your assets—your organization’s gifts and talents. • Maximize use of community resources. There are countless community organizations that want to help, but no one from the school district may have ever reached out to them. Don’t be afraid or embarrassed to ask for help. |

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TABLE 3.1 (Continued)

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| | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently, there are redundancies in school programs and resources. Taking inventory of your assets and eliminating redundancies can result in significant savings. |
| <i>Phase II Entry Plan</i> | Conduct equity audits | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools experienced inequities prior to COVID-19, and they have widened during the pandemic. When students return to school, conduct equity audits to determine student needs and opportunities for growth. Identify barriers to equity. Conduct visual audits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Observe demographics of students enrolled in honors and advanced classes. Observe demographics of students enrolled in career and technical education classes. Observe demographics of students enrolled in special education classes. Observe demographics of community committees, parent-teacher association, and teacher leaders. Conduct listening audits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listen and talk to students about classroom diversity, discipline, and fairness. Listen to teachers speak to determine if they are communicating high or low expectations and equity or inequity. Listen to what school board and other elected officials are saying. Review equity data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor and review equity opportunity and achievement gaps. Monitor and review discipline, attendance, and referral data by subgroup. Monitor and review human resources data by race, gender, and ethnicity. Implement a real-time data dashboard. |
| | Build trust through honest, transparent, and consistent communication | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can never overcommunicate. You cannot count on the media or anyone else to communicate your message. Be proactive. President Roosevelt earned the trust of the American people in part by conducting 30 national fireside chats in his first year. Use a variety of tools to communicate frequently: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Face-to-face communication with individuals and focus groups Social media |

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Digital conferencing ○ Digital newsletters ○ Key communicators—parents and community advocates who can help share your message ● Be visible and responsive. Ensure that people know how to contact you. ● Remain open to new ideas. ● Bury your ego, and be willing to accept good and bad feedback. ● Communicate progress and setbacks. ● Treat everyone with respect, even your critics. |
| Provide a safe place for students and staff | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anticipate the basic physical and psychological needs of students and staff. ● Follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention guidelines for reopening: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Train all students and staff in appropriate safety precautions (handwashing, social distancing, etc.). ○ Sanitize and disinfect surfaces. ○ Encourage students and staff to stay home if they are sick. ● Establish a strong relationship with your local health department. ● Order supplies as soon as possible (face masks, sanitizer, disinfectants, gloves, etc.). Some of these items are in short supply, so plan extra time for shipment and delivery. ● Visually observe and monitor students for stress or signs of unhealthy behaviors, and seek assistance from support professionals (counselors, social workers, psychologists, school nurses, etc.). |
| Assess academic needs of students | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assess the academic status of every student to determine a baseline necessary to create personalized learning plans for every student aligned to state standards and performance indicators. ● Revisit tiered interventions for supporting individual academic needs of students. ● Review and update individualized education plans. |
| Act and implement | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Implement your version of the New Deal. ● Reorganize district leadership structures based on evolving needs of students and available resources. Given the national economy, educators may be required to do more with less. Determine how you will ensure student growth with fewer resources. ● Hire innovators and divergent thinkers. |

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TABLE 3.1 (Continued)

- Shift professional development focus to support digital learning.
- Monitor and evaluate the success of your initiatives, and don't be afraid to eliminate them if they are not producing results.
- Anticipate new challenges and opportunities before they occur.
- Report progress.
- Establish a network with school leaders in other districts. During COVID-19 school closures, superintendents and other leaders engaged in weekly Zoom meetings, webinars, and strategic planning sessions to remain up-to-date on new information and recommendations. Maintain these relationships.

Breakthrough Leadership: Six Principles Guiding Schools Where Inequity Is Not an Option
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