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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Breakthrough Leadership* by Alan M. Blankstein and Marcus J. Newsome. In Chapter three, the authors discuss the key elements in reopening schools during COVID-19.

CHAPTER 3

The First Hundred Days—A Pandemic Reentry Plan

It was a difficult time for everyone. The stock market had plunged, nearly one-fourth of the workforce was unemployed, many parents didn't know how they were going to feed their children, in rural areas farmers were talking openly of a revolution, and protest crowds were growing in the streets. The year was 1929, the lowest point of the Great Depression, which would last for ten years. On March 4, 1933, the crowd that assembled in Washington, DC, in front of the Capitol to watch the inauguration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt had given up on America. However, it turned out to be the beginning of a transformation.

During the first hundred days of Roosevelt's presidency, he presented a series of initiatives to the Seventy-Third United States Congress to counter the impact of the Great Depression. He began to move with unprecedented speed to address the problems facing the nation in his inaugural address, declaring: "I am prepared under my constitutional duty to recommend the measures that a stricken nation in the midst of a stricken world may require" (Walsh, 2009). Roosevelt's specific priorities at the outset of his presidency were getting Americans back to work, protecting their savings and creating prosperity, providing relief for the sick and elderly, and getting industry and agriculture back on their feet (Keith, 2017).

On the hundredth day of his presidency, Roosevelt recited a list of his accomplishments during one of his famous radio fireside chats before an audience of sixty million listeners, resulting in a remarkable turnaround of public trust. The legislation included the creation of federal deposit insurance to reopen

banks and institution of the New Deal—a variety of projects and programs designed to provide relief, recovery, and reform. He created the Securities and Exchange Commission, the National Labor Relations Act, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, Social Security, and the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938. He also signed legislation to end Prohibition and provide assistance to farmers (to produce wheat, dairy products, corn, and tobacco, among other crops). These actions produced mixed results. Following a remarkable turnaround, the economy relapsed into a deep recession in 1937 and 1938. Even so, much of the legislation enacted in Roosevelt’s first hundred days is still in operation almost a hundred years later.

It should be mentioned that, along with his many accomplishments, Roosevelt had moments of extraordinary bad judgment—not the least of which was Executive Order 9066 calling for the internment of more than 112,000 Americans of Japanese ancestry following the invasion of Pearl Harbor. In 2019, the United States government paid more than \$1.6 billion in reparations to survivors of the internment camps and their heirs.

Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic is a unique opportunity for our nation to offer its students a New Deal, where every student can have an equal and equitable opportunity to experience the Declaration of Independence’s recognition that everyone is “endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” This is not a time for small tweaks or adjustments to our education systems, but a time for big, bold, ambitious, innovative, courageous, and breakthrough leadership. Ideally, government, business, civic, and education institutions will work collaboratively to develop a New Deal for education. However, it may be more realistic for grassroots local school communities to take the lead in working with these institutions.

President Roosevelt’s most famous quote is “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” Leaders cannot be afraid of change or failure. Public health and economic experts agree that the key to post-COVID-19 economic recovery begins with reopening day care centers and schools. Other countries, including China, Germany, France, and South Korea, have recognized that reopening schools when it is safe to do must be a national priority (Francis, 2020). Planning for your first hundred days should begin weeks before the first day of the plan, and must include first and foremost the health and emotional well-being of staff and students. Consider Case Story 3.1 from the Brockton Public Schools in Massachusetts.

CASE STORY 3.1

Brockton's Approach to Reopening Schools

by Sharon R. Wolder, Chief Officer of Student Support Services

One of the first steps taken by our district was establishing a call team of nurses, counselors, and bilingual liaisons. These professionals were issued phones and asked to reach out to families in need. Members of our call team speak the languages of most of our students and families. They also understand the cultures of the families so that they can identify the right resources or approaches to support them. The district is committed to having people available to communicate directly with families and help them navigate all of the changes related to learning from home as well as accessing resources and coping with loss.

Brockton has the second-highest rate of COVID-19 cases in the state, which necessitated the closure of most businesses, mandatory masks, and a 9 p.m. curfew. The school district is seeing the impact on adults, as well as the trauma children are experiencing, as they grapple with the impact of this virus. During the closure, the system has struggled to provide technology resources, keep students engaged, and ensure they have adequate amounts of food. In the midst of learning how to run the district remotely, we became aware of students whose families were battling the virus and then of those who lost a member because of COVID-19. Immediately, we had to determine how to provide meaningful support from a distance. Our approach has been to enlist district administrators to deliver food and hygiene products to families in need. Counselors, principals, and teachers call and speak with students or family members to share condolences, ask about their needs, and encourage students to honor their loved one by sharing positive memories or using creative expression such as pictures, songs, and poems in tribute to the person they lost. Most importantly, this outreach is ongoing: the counselors or members of the call team stay in continual contact with students and their families in the absence of school buildings where, in normal times, students would find support from faculty and peers.

Students and families have emerged with different needs in the face of the crisis. Keep in mind that as some move forward with adjusting to the changes caused by this pandemic, those who have suffered personal loss require higher levels of support. Therefore, schools need to be aware of individual students' experience, understand where each student is in the grieving process, and develop a thoughtful and individualized approach to supporting the social and emotional needs of all students while moving them forward academically. This district has designated grieving students as *Handle With Care* to ensure the educators who work with them next school year are aware they have experienced a greater level of trauma during the shutdown.

Several resources used to inform our thinking and practices can be found at <https://resources.corwin.com/BreakthroughLeadership>.

In some cases, entire states are coordinating trauma relief. James F. Lane, Virginia’s superintendent of public instruction, said that as schools reopen, “ameliorating this trauma will be at the core of their mission. I also think that there is a need for us to focus on social and emotional learning for students, and not only how we can provide the academic support, but how can we provide the mental health support and the wraparound supports for students when they come back, to help them recover and bring back that safety net of schools” (Kamenetz, 2020).

For a growing number of districts, equity is at the core of their reopening plans. Eric Moore, chief of accountability, research, and equity for Minneapolis Public Schools, builds equity-mindedness in the district leaders using an “Equity Consideration Process” (ECP) in which all new initiatives require completion of a form to answer key questions: What is the change? Who is impacted by it? What will be the positive and negative impacts? How can we mitigate any negative ones? The ECP forms are reviewed by an equity, diversity, and impact assessment committee of sixteen organizations that address issues for students of color. The process is designed to build capacity by making people who are leading change consider equity issues before beginning the change process.

Case Story 3.2, from the Orange County Schools in North Carolina, demonstrates another multifaceted and interlocking team-planning approach for which the overarching steering committee is focused on ensuring equity and voice for those often underrepresented in such critical decision making.

CASE STORY 3.2

Planning to Reopen More Equitable Schools

by Dena Keeling, Chief Equity Officer

I have five subcommittees to the Closing the Gap and Acceleration Committee, respectively addressing each of the following:

1. Intensive summer and remote learning with a focus on students who are difficult to reach (Our state is requiring all districts to have a remote learning plan.)
2. School reentry, including all state guidelines, logistics, pedagogy changes, busing, food, safety protocols, temperature checks, equipment, and procurement of masks, sanitizer, and other personal protective equipment

3. Accessibility via technology for *all* students, including English learners and students with disabilities
4. Human resources/human capital (When we take into account existing staff shortages, staff absences on account of illness, budget cuts, and early retirements, we face a personnel shortage.)
5. Communication at district and school levels, including plans conveyed to community partners and parents, new alliances with mental health organizations and professionals who are constantly on the ready, and other needs not yet determined

The Closing the Gap and Acceleration Committee coordinates and reviews plans from all five subcommittees to ensure a focus on our “Center Students.” Equity-minded, diverse, and innovative, this guiding committee developed questions for each of the subcommittees to address. For example, the state required that every student have access to a device. The appropriate subcommittee then added: What accommodations are needed for students with disabilities or who speak other languages?

Our curriculum needs to have evidence that it will work for our African American students, our homeless students, and other marginalized groups. Normally, the district would come up with a plan for 80 percent of students and then tweak it for our Center Students. We’ve reversed that.

Think About It

Who is involved in creating your plan for school reopening? Are those involved representative of all stakeholders and students? Do they bring the necessary contacts and experience to engage the larger community and financial supporters? What is your paradigm for decision making?

One major consideration at the forefront of planning for reopening schools is referenced in Chapter 2: What do students need to know, and how can we best meet that need? The tendency following this world pandemic may be to rush into reopening schools, yet the case stories just told would caution a more thoughtful approach.

Another area in which we might miss an opportunity is in attempting to meet the basic needs of staff and students, at the expense of attending to their more robust needs and abilities. “Robust equity” addresses this.



Robust Equity: From Surviving to Thriving

by David Osher, Jill Young, and Rob Mayo

► Equity is more than equal access to shallow learning. *Robust* equity is multidimensional. It builds on our best knowledge that all children and youth can and should thrive—socially, emotionally, cognitively, physically, economically, and spiritually. It is not only mindful of thriving but sets thriving as the goal for young people. It recognizes that well-being in one domain contributes to well-being in others. Robust equity addresses individual and collective dimensions of thriving.

Within educational settings, this means addressing students' academic needs through culturally responsive after-school tutoring or small-group sessions in multiple languages that also support students' emotional well-being during moments of local or global crisis. This might include small-group sessions with bilingual staff in an after-school setting and collaborating with community-based organizations and public agencies (see, for example, Osher et al., 2018). Robust equity intentionally counters inequality and institutionalized privilege and prejudice, and creates conditions that support overall well-being.

For example, far too many students, particularly those of color and those with disabilities, disproportionately experience the negative effects of harsh exclusionary discipline, due to stress, attitudes, and mindsets of staff and a lack of support for students. Similarly, providing equal access to Advanced Placement (AP) classes is not enough. We must also provide social and emotional support and mental health services to address challenges that limit meaningful participation in AP and International Baccalaureate, including identity, stereotype threat, implicit bias, unmet mental health needs, and unequal opportunities to learn.

Robust equity is possible (see Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). We can design and support conditions that focus on opportunities to learn and develop, including *the quality of instruction* (see Chapter 8). Development-rich environments are culturally responsive and provide opportunities for students to wonder, think critically and deeply, develop their identity, express themselves, develop their social and emotional skills, and experience meaning and spiritual engagement.

We can also realize equity by improving *school climate*—that is, the conditions for learning and development, such as physical and emotional, connectedness and belonging, challenge and adult engagement, peer and adult social and emotional competence, restorative approaches to discipline, and cultural competence and responsiveness.

The quality of content and *the amount of learning time* are additional factors in achieving equity in a school. Young people benefit from environments that can help them realize their full potential as intelligent, creative, socially responsible, critical thinking whole persons.

Learning from and with students, we find that many youth of color, as well as students who are economically disadvantaged, students with disabilities, and students who are LGBTQIA+, face barriers to learning that limit their opportunities to reach their potential in general, or in particular areas, which has been amplified by COVID-19. *Necessary supports* may be physical, social, emotional, and psychological.

These supports post-COVID-19 will include mental health services as needed that avoid stigma, labeling, and segregation, and are (1) culturally competent, responsive, and humble; (2) child centered and youth, consumer, and family driven; (3) individualized; (4) strengths based and building; (5) contributory to thriving; and (6) family, school, and community based. Effective wraparound approaches provide a useful framework.

We must avoid a simplistic notion of just focusing on the basics and catch-up because resources are tight. This approach will be counterproductive and reinforce inequity during a historical moment when mental health needs are likely to rise universally along with poverty. Given the pandemic, we will need to double down on relationship and community building, norms setting, and restorative practices, which include but are not limited to culturally responsive social and emotional learning strategies, opportunities for healing and repairing harm, and attention to minimizing suspension and eliminating corporal punishment and racial harassment and microaggressions.

Triaging efforts away from well-being supports—including trauma-sensitive mental health services—will contribute to health ill-being. Triaging efforts away from deeper education and creativity and culturally responsive social and emotional learning will undermine the ability of our graduates to be entrepreneurial, to be socially responsible, and to gain good jobs at a time when jobs will continue to be replaced by artificial intelligence and robotics and when community economic development is particularly important. This is the moment to go beyond minimizing what our students need and can do. Instead, we must support their identity development, critical thinking, and civic engagement in order to provide the individual and collective skills to work for change that eliminates inequality and promotes equity.

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

<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. • Frequently, there are redundancies in school programs and resources. Taking inventory of your assets and eliminating redundancies can result in significant savings.

*Phase II
Entry
Plan*

Conduct equity audits

- 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:
 - 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:
 - 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:
 - 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

- 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:
 - Face-to-face communication with individuals and focus groups
 - Social media
 - Digital conferencing
 - Digital newsletters
 - Key communicators—parents and community advocates who can help share your message

(Continued)

TABLE 3.1 (Continued)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. • 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.
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Schools are starting to look very different. To make up for learning loss, some districts have converted to a year-round schedule. As James F. Lane, the Virginia superintendent for public instruction, told NPR, “I think there will be opportunities for us to discuss different ways to approach calendars.” He has also encouraged school officials to develop school calendars with multiple options that consider opening, closing, and reopening if future outbreaks of COVID-19 occur (Kamenetz, 2020).

Maria Litvinova, a researcher at the Institute for Scientific Interchange in Turin, Italy, argues that without treatments or a vaccine, “there is no such thing as ‘safe’ reopening” (Kamenetz, 2020).

Nevertheless, it is important to balance safety with the impact on families and the economy. Some schools are limiting social contact by bringing students to schools in shifts, thus decreasing class sizes. At the Copenhagen International School in Denmark, students are grouped in classes of ten (Kamenetz, 2020). COVID-19 risk to healthy children is very low. However, the risk to students with preexisting conditions and their teachers is much greater.

The need for remote or distance learning is likely to continue, even after school reopenings. The challenge will be to maintain equity for students learning in school buildings and at home.

Art Stellar, former superintendent of the Burke County Public Schools in western North Carolina, strongly believes an entry plan ought to serve as a reality check. A well-thought-out entry plan will pay huge dividends in the long term.

Chapter 4 lays the foundation for “relational trust” using six principles proven effective in developing high-performing and equitable schools.

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