



Dream Bigger

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"I want things to go back to the way they were." I hear this sentiment over and over again from educators around the world, and I certainly understand. COVID-19 has created challenging times in schools in unprecedented ways. It arrived without a handbook and we have been navigating the changing landscape as we go along. We are exhausted. We are frustrated. We are concerned for the physical and mental health of our students and ourselves. We want what is best for our students and their families, and we want to see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, we must not confuse our desire to put the pandemic behind us with our true desire for our schools. To return to the way things were would be a missed opportunity to capitalize on the possibilities that lie ahead.

Throughout the pandemic, students have shown their flexibility and resolve. Whether learning online, in person, or in a hybrid model, we have seen the majority of students exhibit an admirable sense of responsibility, independence, and a willingness to use their voices for the good of the whole. Students have risen to the occasion. They have shown that they are full of untapped potential and endless ideas and skills to teach us! Returning to the way things were is not in the best interest of our students; they would be better served if we all work toward the way things should be.

To navigate the unexpected shifts in education, we must acknowledge where we currently are and learn from our experiences over the past several months— then gather our collective strength and commit to forward progress. I have two young granddaughters, and when each took her first step, it was a glorious moment. We celebrated the accomplishment, supported their continued progress, and before we knew it, they were running. Our first step going back to learning in person will be our most courageous. That step could be glorious if we provide students with more choices, more independence, more responsibility, and more leadership opportunities. This will allow students to hit their stride and reach their personal, social, and academic potential.

It is important to respect, celebrate, and encourage the growth students have demonstrated during this unique time. We need to have faith in ourselves, believe in the potential of our students, and remain willing to grow from the challenges we face together. Do not let our past be the goal of our future. Dream bigger!