Leading in Disruptive Times

THE MAIN IDEA's One-Pagers to Help School Leaders Ride The C's of Change

Connection

You have a choice. As a school leader, you can resist the current wave of unprecedented change or you can make the most of it by riding that wave with the C's of change.

The 1st one-pager was about **calm and comfort** (click). The 2nd one was about **clarity and communication**. **Now the 3rd C is all about CONNECTION.**

"Connection is why we're here. We are hardwired to connect with others, it's what gives purpose and meaning to our lives, and without it there is suffering." **Brené Brown**

During this crisis, we are all inextricably tied together. There is tremendous opportunity to optimize and build on this connection. The culture of your school *post* COVID will depend on how well you build connection *during* the crisis.

Every great school leader I know purposefully and actively connects with students and staff.

20 great ways you, as a school leader, can build *CONNECTION*

Shared symbols help people feel connected.

A sense of belonging comes from being part of something larger. Adapt or borrow the following to include in your communications:

1. A **motto** for your school at this time like "courage together" or "we're pulling together without being together"

2. A **hashtag** for your school for these times (in New York, we have #NYtough)

3. A **mascot** like this one from the US Consumer Product Safety Commission: Quinn the Quarantine Fox. His nightly messages end with "Good night, kind friends. Tomorrow we care for one another all over again."

4. An **image** like Debbie Millman's "Together Apart"

Convening helps people feel connected.

5. When you hold staff meetings, use **breakout groups** to deepen contact.

6. Hold **virtual happy hours** with staff and **virtual coffee chats** with families.

7. To curb loneliness, Cornell students created the **Quarantine Buddy** app. Set up all students with a buddy to get missed assignments, check in, etc.

8. For staff & student meetings, in addition to content or skill development, have **one goal** be to **connect**.

9. Ask teachers to give **assignments that connect** students to others – interview a classmate, do an oral history of a family member, help someone else, etc.

Collaborating helps people feel connected.

10. Gratitude builds connections. At a meeting, have staff share appreciations via a **gratefulness Padlet** like this (thanks Mel!)

11. With staff, **brainstorm ways to stay connected** during the pandemic. In 5 minutes my colleague Danny Bauer's team came up with 212 ideas!

12. Match volunteers – older students tutoring younger ones, younger students making cards for the elderly, etc.

13. Plan an **online game night** – try online Trivial Pursuit, Scattergories, or Bingo (email the cards ahead of time).

14. Create a **virtual spirit week –** people wear PJs Monday, school colors Tuesday, etc.

Communicating helps people feel connected.

15. Try communicating your message more personally with a **video app** like Loom.

16. Sharing vulnerabilities makes people feel connected. Have staff finish these sentences at a meeting, "The thing that's toughest for me now is…" "Something not going well with remote learning is…" "I need help with…"

17. Use "**we**," "**us**," and "**our**" more than "me," "I," and "my."

18. Communicate how much your staff cares in a **joint video** like this one from Henri A. Yelle Elementary (you will cry!)

19. Repurpose **grading as connecting** - see Bill Ferriter's tweet.

20. Kick it old school by **sending letters** like this incredible teacher or **sitting 6 feet away from an upset student** in her driveway (image left).

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