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What Do We Do Now?
2020 Special Edition Closing of School

The 2020 closing of school has been unprecedented and unlike anything we have ever experienced in our professional lives. All of us have been called upon to make decisions and adjustments we never thought we would have to face. For most of us, the year ended with unoccupied buildings without students or staffs. The traditional **Just ASK Closing of School Checklist** is available in the ***Just for the ASKing!*** library at https://justaskpublications. com/jfta/jfta-library/, because, even in this unusual year, it serves as a tool for review and reflection; we are aware, however, that it does not address many of our most pressing realities.

To address the conditions in which we find ourselves today, members of the Just ASK Team (Marcia Baldanza, Heather Clayton, Brenda Kaylor, Julie McVicker, Bruce Oliver, Paula Rutherford, Theresa West, and Becky Watson) put their heads together (virtually) to develop a list of questions titled "**What Do We Do Now?**" We are aware that some questions will not apply to your current reality and that you no doubt have many questions we did not list here. Our intent is to provide you food for thought as you move forward. We also think that some of these items could be used in surveys of students, staff, and parents to both get their input and to let them know what you and your team are considering.

Wrapping Up the 2019-2020 School Year

For some of you, school officially closes in early May; for others the official closing is in mid to late June. This section addresses issues that some of you have completed but no matter what, all are either continuing to deal with at least some of the questions included here and/or asking yourselves "What did we learn from this unique closing?", "What worked?", "What didn't work?" and "What might we do differently in the future?"

Celebrations:
- How did/might all teachers personally celebrate the year with their current students?
- How /did/can we recognize and celebrate on a school level the accomplishments of students this past year and, for the class of 2020 the accomplishments of their entire careers as K-12 students?
- How did/might we recognize and celebrate the parents who, more than ever, became our partners in educating our learners?
- How did/might we recognize and celebrate school and district support staff for their incredible contributions?
- How did/might we celebrate one another for individual and group collaboration, accomplishments, and support as a professional learning community?
- How did/might we each celebrate our own personal accomplishments and reflect on all we have learned?

What was/is the most efficient way to collect keys, grade books, lesson plans, and other required documents from teachers?

How did/can we ensure that official documents like final grades, diplomas, updates cumulative records and updated transcripts are handled correctly and promptly?

Were/are there any purchasing or work orders that need to be finalized?

How can faculty and staff evaluations for 2019-2020 best be handled so that professional learning and goals can be planned for 2020-2021?

How did/will students clean out their lockers or desks and how did/will teachers collect their belongings from their classrooms? (medications, musical instruments, coats, shoes, etc.)

What are our options for following-up with students who did/do not participate in the virtual learning opportunities we have provided and will provide going forward? Given that

there are many possible causes and that we know the intervention should match the cause of the non-participation, how do we proceed?

What questions should be on our three surveys (students, staff, and families) about their experiences with distance learning this spring and their preferences for 2020-2021 scheduling and learning conditions? The results will be a powerful tool for the opening of school in the fall of 2020, whether it is face-to-face, virtual, or blended.

Collaborating on the 2020-2021 Opening of School

What are realistic goals for staff collaboration and how might we achieve them in our virtual environment?

In what ways can we collaborate on planning the teacher work days/week, building a master schedule (or multiple master schedule options – traditional, virtual, or blended), student placement, and teaching assignments in order to maximize student achievement no matter what format is our reality in the fall? As needed, what conferencing apps would work best for us?

How do we collaboratively harness the new digital knowledge and skills developed by individual staff members to ensure th0se learnings are shared across all the staff? Should this be a primary focus of our professional learning during the upcoming school year? (A few questions on a staff survey might capture significant information about this important element of our repertoires.)

While many intent forms have been submitted, current conditions and an uncertain future may lead to changes in plans. Given that, how do we navigate additional vacancies and find, interview, and hire replacements?

How will we register students for the new year? What if they have moved and are missing information/documents?

Should we prepare a video or virtual tour of the school to put on the school website; might we email a link to newly registering students and their families?

What is the best way to gather data about past services required and provided to any and all new students (whether or not they have IEPs or 504 plans) who may require special attention prior to the opening of school in the fall?

Do we need to add a section to our emergency preparedness plan that addresses the

possibility of a phase II of COVID 19? What variables should be addressed? Building visitors? PPE? Evacuation? Resource distribution?

What actions do we need to take to orchestrate a smooth transition back into the school house which may look and feel different when students and teachers return (i.e., cafeteria, library, recess, class size, hours/days of attendance, etc.)? How do we communicate those changes to teachers, students, and families?

Thinking About Summer Learning and the Well Being of Students

Could instructional coaches work collaboratively to generate lists of summer reading, listening, and viewing resources related to the learning standards that are engaging and interesting, perhaps don't even seem like school? This could be spaced out so that new annotated resources are introduced each week. (This could be a powerful alternative learning experiences for coaches instead of a typical book club.)

How might we use television programs and movies popular with students as a basis to generate math, science, art, music, social studies activities?

What do we need to know and do to prepare for summer school? Dates? Formats (face-to-face, virtual, blended)? Registration?

What special resources and support systems can we arrange for special needs students and second language learners during the summer?

What staffing and schedule plans sho ⬥ for continued meal and hygiene kit distribution?

Determining Student Readiness for Learning

Given that students have not had the structure of the school day since March, how can we address the social emotional needs of our students upon their possible return to a full-day school structure in the fall?

The learning patterns of students who move/change school districts may be impacted by the fact that some school districts did not introduce new content during the 4th quarter, others introduced only essential standards, and some charged onward full speed; how will we adjust pacing and areas of focus in the fall to accommodate those differences?

Many educators are determined to focus on the social-emotional impact of this pandemic on students' lives in general and their education in particular and are reluctant to involve students in extensive testing in the fall. How will we navigate this quandary?

While keeping in mind student's social and emotional health, what are our best options for determining their readiness for the curriculum they would be encountering under usual conditions? What are alternative scheduling/grouping approaches that we might implement and still maintain social and emotional health?

Taking Care of One Another as We Open School

If working virtually, how will we remember to stay in contact with one another socially. (Hint: Zoom is just as good for virtual happy hours as it is for class sessions.)

How shall we celebrate small wins?

What are the ways that we can be sure that all students are aware of their opportunities for and have access to all programs and extracurricular activities, including any that require applications, auditions, or interviews?

How shall we coordinate with local health departments regarding students who have been exposed?

What will we do for students who have lost loved ones?

How will mentors and coaches lead our induction program which may or may not only include virtual components and some novice teachers who missed a significant part of their student teaching experience or final pre-service projects as well.

What is the best way to be sure that i ⬥ ch as PTSA chair positions, team leaders, department heads, curriculum leads, etc. are filled and that all interested parties are aware of the possibilities and selection process?

Working with Parents as Partners

What systems and personnel could work to ensure that each family receives a personal communication from the school that is both welcoming and informative about plans and procedures for the opening of school. Personal means the names of the recipients (rather than "Eagles family/student") are used in the communication; a phone call/message from a reassuring voice (staff or student leader) would be ideal for the

welcoming component.

How might we authentically engage with families and community members for their input on important decisions, improvement plans, distance learning, orientations, etc.?

What are our best tactics for frequently and explicitly demonstrating our recognition, appreciation, and celebration of parental efforts to work with us, whatever that interaction might be?

What are the best systems for staying connected with and supporting:
• families regarding challenges with online learning, mental health, and declining resources?
• families who may not be at home during the day?
• families ill-equipped to provide support for high levels of home learning?
• family members who do not speak or read English?

What are the best ways to schedule and implement a process for the safe return and/or distribution of digital devices, musical instruments, and other school resources and for parents or older students to retrieve personal items stored at school now or in the future?

How will we monitor and lend support when there are financial hardships due to unemployment? For instance, what might we do handle:
• Damaged or missing technology or books
• Lack of school supplies
• Rental fees for musical instruments
• Entrance/Application fees for special events or organizations