



The Crisis Planner Back to School 2020

**“A New Learning Experience for
Everyone”**

The calendar says September 1st. There is a hint of fall in the air as the nights are cooler and the humidity falls here in New York.

It's Back to School 2020, or is it?

2020 is like no other year anyone has experienced. COVID-19 has permeated every aspect of our lives including something as mundane and predictable as going back to school.

We have spent the last five and a half months in various stages of shut-down. Have listened to the media tell us it's not safe out there. Our children missed up to three months of school at the end of last year as schools, teachers, parents and children tried to deal with a virtual learning situation that no one was prepared for.

Most of us spent the summer hoping that by September things would be different. Maybe even normal.

But, here we are, and it is not.

Over the last few months I've listened as teachers voiced fears that it was not safe to go back into the classroom. That children would never be able to maintain social distancing or wear masks properly. We all know what a petri dish school can be. Ask any parent about how by the end of the first week of school their child is already sick.

School districts all over the US have been working on plans for the school year. Plans that included delayed starts, all in-person learning, all distance learning, half-in and half-out learning models, no classroom changes, no lunchrooms, and no sports.

All I keep hearing is, “NO, NO, NO!”

When what I would like to hear is, “Yes, this is how we can do it, this is how we are going to do it, and this is our contingency if we have to modify the plan.”

I remember when I was going into the 1st grade during the baby boom. School districts did not have enough classrooms to accommodate all the students. They were building new schools as fast as they could but, they just could not get the classroom space on line fast enough.

The solution was to offer split sessions. Half the students attended class in the morning and half in the afternoon. Mid-year we flipped, those who had been on early shift were now in the afternoon. It was not ideal but it worked.



Split sessions could be a work around reducing the number of children in each classroom. The district could be split geographically for logistical transportation.

On Long Island we have another challenge. Most of our schools do not have air-conditioning. Add to that, most of the windows have been sealed as a deterrent to “active shooters” and regulations require doors to the hallway be closed.

One of the most important things in preventing the spread of COVID-19 is air flow. The current status of our classrooms would prevent necessary exchange of air in the classroom. We would need to install a system to purify the air and kill the virus in each classroom. I have seen units that use UV3 light and upward air flow that are being installed in some restaurants. Could that be the solution we need?



The biggest challenge with remote learning is that not every child learns the same way. Some do very well, but some do not. I know myself that I do not absorb information I read on the internet the same way as I would from a book or in a live classroom.

Teaching in a classroom is very different from teaching on-line. It is a skill most teachers have not trained for. Just as in a classroom some of the students will get it. Some will need more help. Some parents are more engaged and able to help. Some parents will throw their

hands up and say it's not my job, that's what I pay you for.

You cannot control the learning environment at home the way you can control it in the classroom. Unless the school district is providing the same tools and resources to each student, the division between those that have access and those that do not will continue to grow.

I have concerns about children having their workstation in their bedrooms where prying eyes can see and make judgements about students, their families, and their socio-economic status. The child's bed should never be visible to the teacher or other students.

Overall the goal should be that children and teachers remain safe and healthy.

- **Will that mean daily temperature checks?**
- **Will that mean you do not send a child to school if they might be sick?**
- **Will that mean everyone wears a mask or face shield?**
- **Will it mean that Healthy Distancing will be in place?**
- **Will it mean more hand washing and sanitizing?**
- **Will that mean that there is a physical barrier between teacher and students?**
- **Will that mean that some teachers with health issues will not be in the classroom?**
- **Will that mean that we will have a quarantine classroom for those who have been exposed?**
- **Will that mean that riding the school bus is not something everyone does?**
- **Will that mean we all have to be flexible and resilient, knowing that we are in unknown territory?**
- **Will that mean in-school learning can become on-line learning at any moment?**

Yes!

It will mean all those things.

2020 is a year like no other year we have lived through.

We do not want our children to fall behind because we could not figure it out for them.

They are the future. Our future. We want them to grow up to be well adjusted adults that will look back at these COVID-19 times and remember the good parts and not the scary and bad things. That is our job.

I would love for them to remember COVID-19 times as the time they spent with their parents doing things together. Sitting down at the table and eating meals that they cooked together. Memories of the time spent playing with and/or taking care of their siblings, fighting over the remote and enjoying just being together.

I have seen so many families truly get to know each other. These COVID-19 times allowed us all to pause and be grateful for the little things in life. We have learned to entertain ourselves in simple ways again – doing jigsaw puzzles, playing card games and board games and making silly videos for our friends and family to see.

Now it's time for back to school after nearly 6 months.

The children are taking their cues from us.

- **If we are afraid, they will be afraid.**
- **If we are confident, they will be confident.**
- **If we are resilient, they will be resilient.**

All they know is they want to go back to school.

They want to be with their friends.

They want to play sports.

They want to go to dance class.

They just want to be kids...

Stay safe out there...



Get off the Worry-Go-Round

With The Crisis Planner

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