



IT'S BEEN A CHAOTIC FEW MONTHS.

Nearly every aspect of American life has been upended by the scourge of a deadly virus and the social and economic fallout of a months-long lockdown intended to slow the contagion.

School buildings in nearly every state either were, or still are, closed. But, as we head into summer, there are glimmers of hope. Daily cases are trending down in many states and school leaders are shifting their mindsets from the delivery of essential services amid the sheer shock and uncertainty of the initial crisis to back-to-school planning and the not-so-subtle reality that school life is likely to look and feel different for students, parents, and staff this fall — or whenever they do eventually return.

If your community had questions before, they're bound to have even more now.

*Is it safe to bring my kids to your facilities?
What is the new schedule going to look like?
Are we going to continue to do distance learning?
As a teacher, am I going to get additional training for all this?*

Teachers and staff, all of whom have given selflessly to support students and families during the crisis, are going to need your help professionally, and perhaps personally. Students are going to face steep inequities, and social-

emotional health is going to be among a litany of factors used to rewrite the very definition of school success.

Everybody is writing and talking about back-to-school and what that is going to look like. But almost nobody has successfully answered the harder question: How do we plan for this — realistically?

In May, K12 *Insight* and AASA, The School Superintendents Association, hosted a national Crystal Ball conversation for more than 500 school leaders and superintendents. The invite-only event featured perspectives and ideas from three forward-thinking school leaders: Dr. Luvelle Brown, superintendent, Ithaca City School District (NY); Dr. Michael Hinojosa, superintendent, Dallas Independent School District (TX) and Dr. Debra Pace, superintendent, The School District of Osceola County (FL).

While each school leader recognized and lamented immense difficulties posed by the ongoing health crisis — from equity to looming budget shortfalls — they also pointed to a clear opportunity for change, and the chance to reinvent many of the antiquated systems that have too long stymied innovation in public education. Among these opportunities, a renewed emphasis on family and school partnership, social-emotional support for staff and families, and a commitment to exceptional customer service.

At K12 *Insight*, we pride ourselves on working with school leaders to build and nurture community trust. This guide was created to help you plan for school life in this new normal, to successfully navigate the challenges of re-entry, and to create and sustain a supportive environment where students, parents, staff, and others feel safe, empowered, and engaged, wherever learning happens in your community.

Moving forward

As we emerge from this murky crisis and into a different and — with some luck — clearer future, we hope the ideas and insights featured here inspire positive change in your schools.

Here's to you and the amazing work you continue to do on behalf of students and families.

Now, let's get to the good stuff.

Dr. Gerald Dawkins,
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Former superintendent, Michigan and Louisiana

If, at any time, you want to talk about these challenges, or if you're looking for a system to help build and nurture positive parent and staff connections amid distance-learning efforts in your schools this fall, we'd be happy to show you how other school districts are using our Let's Talk! solution to share information and maintain two-way conversations with their communities. To learn more, visit us at www.K12Insight.com.

