



Looking Forward

I think we can all agree that although there have been some positive outcomes related to the pandemic, the majority of our time was spent in the moment, navigating the day to day with heightened anxiety and apprehension. Testing, quarantine, and isolation became the norm. Conversation, collaboration, and connection was only available to those able to log on or physically distance. While these environments allowed for basic interaction, it soon became clear that sustaining this method of teaching and learning over the course of a school year was not at all ideal, but it was the only solution. Our lives, our profession, and our classrooms felt out of balance. Voices were often left out. Work went ungraded or not turned in at all. Ambitions and motivation were hard to actualize. It is hard to set goals and manage expectations in a world where nothing is commonplace. I am ready for the future.

This issue's installment of *Taking the Creative Leap* has left me inspired and set the perfect tone for what I hope to be a start to a fresh and productive school year for all. The time has come to truly look forward, for what is past, is past. I feel it, my colleagues feel it, and most importantly, my students feel it. In the column, the authors discuss that in this new, post-Covid environment, we should be encouraging our students to transcend the present and work to develop a positive future orientation by setting goals and forecasting what is to come. Sign me up!

This issue is full of terrific ideas, practices, and suggestions for starting off this school year with a fresh outlook and new beginning. *Makerspaces: Tinkering is Fun for Teachers, Too!*, by Anne Roberts, looks at a great enrichment opportunity where students can problem solve, develop creative ideas, and collaborate with their peers. Tutita Case's piece, *Beyond the Algorithm: Advancing Students with Mathematical Promise*, shares helpful insights for teachers looking to understand their student's various computational approaches

to problems. *Teaching Empathy in Your Elementary School Classroom*, by Suzanna Henson, presents specific ways educators can infuse lessons on, and teach with, empathy in their classrooms, ensuring that this vital understanding is instilled at an early age. *Special Populations* reminds us that as we begin the new school year, we should do so by implementing strategies to support cultural responsiveness. *Curriculum Café* offers five core teaching strategies for A.P. or any advanced classroom. You have already heard about the topic of *Taking the Creative Leap*. *Unwrapping the Gifted* tells an all too familiar story of a young, gifted student that we can all relate to. *The Digital Ecosystem* stresses that we have the tools to invite students back to school in an emotionally safe and instructionally sound manner, minimizing the natural stressors caused by the global pandemic. *iMathination* illustrates how to engage students in practices that mathematicians use to further promote mathematical thinking. *Teachers Engaging Parents* explains 8 important myths teachers should consider when working with parents of gifted children and *Social and Emotional Learning* asks how educators can support students in managing their stress and anxiety, heightened by the past year.

Reflection is necessary. Acknowledgement of the past is important. Let us not dwell too long though, looking for what was or what could have been. Let us look forward, envisioning a future of what will be. That is all we have. That is what we need.

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