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**DECEMBER** Edition  
Post School Opening  
Edu-COVID Series

This was one of the quotations that very heartfully touches educators around the world during this pandemic.

However, teachers, leaders, learners and parents/guardians, had no alternative but to accept the situation and bring the best attitude and practices into it.

Time has flown fast, and most schools worldwide have **successfully** covered the first quarter and on their path towards the second. The challenges have been immense on all stakeholders, mainly teachers, as they had to manage their content and new, digital style.

The focus now is more on **assessment**, and particularly on summative assessment. Schools are expected to issue interim progress reports and report cards. This represents the synthesis of various factors. Responsibility and accountability are paramount for schools. **Commitment and adaptability** are paramount for families.

Many institutions are also preparing for their standardized tests, such as CBSE doing their practical exams and going through the meticulous preparation and implementation of safety and reliability measures. Learners, who have already relocated, will be waiting for the board's approval for center transfer, putting learners and principals in anxiety.

Contingency plans for British school testing were not released early as usual, amid a strong voice that taking GCSE and A level Tests is not fair, having those 6 months+ losses. The tests will take place in 2021 and all support materials have been issued, including consultation sessions to specify test material and discuss any issues about the syllabuses.

Australian schools are ending their academic year this December and will be soon preparing for their next academic year in January/February 2021 and the prep for another year of blended learning starts again.

With a **vaccination** approved and dispatched gradually to countries, questions are still left open. Preventing COVID cases at least during 2021 is surely not possible due to the need for full coverage and high validity of vaccine. The vaccine is still refused by many people and for this reason, only time will show how this will all unfold. Therefore, the education sector needs to continue improving and monitoring blended learning.

However, now that schools have settled in a way or another, more emphasis on advancing learning is highly recommended - the preparation for the new learning styles and content, mainly **deep content learning\*** and **extensive learning**. [Different from deep learning related to machine learning/ this comes at more advanced levels and in other different contents]. **STEAM** is a major form of this learning.

Deep content learning involves critical thinking, a basic element of computational thinking, design thinking, and multi-structural communication and speaking.

Extensive learning involves larger coverage of areas, both core and supplementary so that learners meet the needs of the future workplace and lifestyle.

More will be discussed in the upcoming editions.



# Reminder 2: Focus Synergy



SMART UNDERTSANDING  
OF SITUATION  
(COUNTRY/REGION LEVEL)



STAKEHOLDERS'  
COLLABORATION



FEEDBACK LOOPS



*HIGHLY-EFFECTIVE*  
TEACHERS



FLEXIBILITY

These were fully explained in Post COVID School (Version 1)  
from the Edu-COVID Series, published in July 2020.

[www.orbitsdevelopment.com](http://www.orbitsdevelopment.com)

# Reminder 3: Focus Urgency



ACCOUNTABILITY

1



ACADEMIC  
ACHIEVEMENTS/LOSSES

2



ALIGNMENT

3



INCLUSION

4




HOME COOPERATION

5

These were fully explained in Post COVID School (Version 2) from the Edu-COVID Series, published in August 2020.

[www.orbitsdevelopment.com](http://www.orbitsdevelopment.com)

The background is a dark, blurred image of a document. A pen is visible in the upper right corner, pointing towards a line graph. The graph has several data points and lines. Some numbers are visible, such as '2.5' on the left and '2.47' on the right. The overall tone is professional and focused.

Focus Urgency

# Accountability



Schools continue to check their **accountability** as they head towards the second half of the first term. While many schools are moving steadily, few are not. They are forced to make new plans and even replace teachers, who leave the school for emergency reasons. They may be understaffed so the general environment becomes stressful. They may be overwhelmed with the daily hurdles, adding to the anxiety of the school community.

The following points can be checked:

- ✓ To what extent are leaders **compassionate**?
- ✓ To what extent are leaders able to make the **wise decisions**, not only the right ones?
- ✓ Are leaders following up on **isolation rules** in case of COVID case detection?
- ✓ What would the **reaction of leaders** be when an unexpected incident related to COVID occurs?
- ✓ Are teachers, who have been given extra classes or moved from one grade level to the other, ensured that their **efforts are fully recognized**?
- ✓ Have leaders sent an **interim report card** to inform parents about the children's progress ?
- ✓ Can leaders assure that last year's **missing skills and objectives** have been covered?
- ✓ Have leaders worked on a "**fair monitoring**" during assessments and "**fair grading**" for all **learners**, including what is referred to as "cheating" prevention so that no unfair judgement is made? (Remembering that the school conditions were imposed upon all stakeholders, not a choice)



Focus Urgency

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# Academic Achievements / Losses





## Instruction



- **Engagement** is key to active learning and teachers have to be responsive to their learners' need for stimulated learning, especially when learning is occurring online. Kindergarten and Elementary classes can enjoy screen games, such as The Class Wave (when all learners and teachers move their arms simultaneously as a wave). This can be decided upon by the entire class. For example, doing The Class Wave to signal starting an activity, starting a questioning session, or when discovering a main idea or theme. This makes the class fun and involves the body, the mind, and the heart, as most if not all, will feel happy and energized.
- Schools or teachers, that can afford online platforms, may find it much more effective to purchase online teaching and learning space, such as *Nearpod*, that can make lessons **interactive** through videos, gamifications, assessments, and feedback on one platform. Other platforms, such as *Jognog* for American CCSS, and *Firefly*, that facilitates British curriculum teachers' work in collaboration with partners to monitor progress and enhance learning.

## Assessment



- **Low stakes quizzes** are very helpful. They are not teaching-time consuming and they do give a clear idea about learners' understanding.
- Using **exit sketches** can be helpful as well, when asked to have those slips ready and using them online. For example, they can be sent through Google Classroom or directed towards screen.
- **Collaborative mind map** is another excellent strategy, as it helps to see the wider picture of the learner's understanding. It can be done every end of the week or end of theme.
- Another very effective way of assessment is **debate**. That's when learners can support their viewpoints with reasons and examples, enhancing their critical thinking skills. *Kailo-edu*, inspired by Kailo the mapping argument site for institutions, is a free platform that teachers can use for conducting debates in their classes.



Collecting **Feedback**

and using it to design and  
redesign



Integrating **SEL**

Social-emotional learning  
components to all subjects

## Language Arts\*



\* This applies to all languages

**Vocabulary** is another fundamental skill in learning languages. Teaching vocabulary, the old way, through definitions and writing sentences is not enough. Paragraph writing is a very good practice.

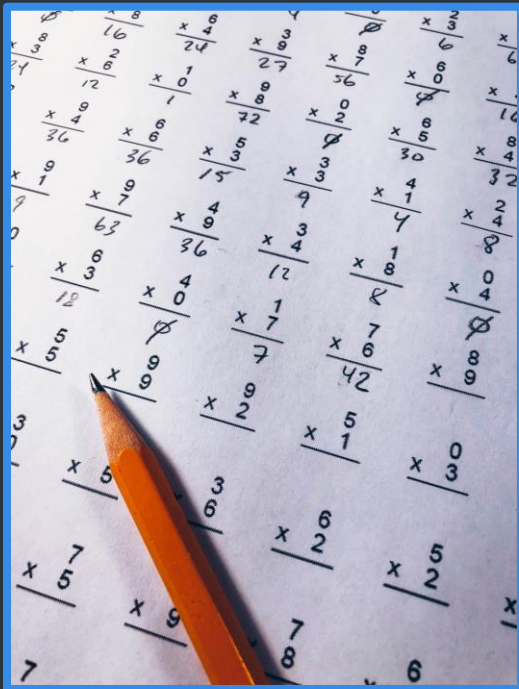
However, building those bridges towards more vocabulary from context and word banks for writing purposes requires certain strategies to help smooth the process out.

Focus on **content area vocabulary** is essential to solidify learning. Strategies that can be incorporated (shared with classmates) during home learning for this purpose:

- Word games
- Word Bank/Box (any shoe box at home can be used)
- Weekly Show and Tell using vocabulary (To avoid time constraints, it can be 1 minute long only and performed by 2 to 4 learners only)

Focus on **multiple-meaning words** is also essential. It can be connected to other subject matters as well.

## Mathematics

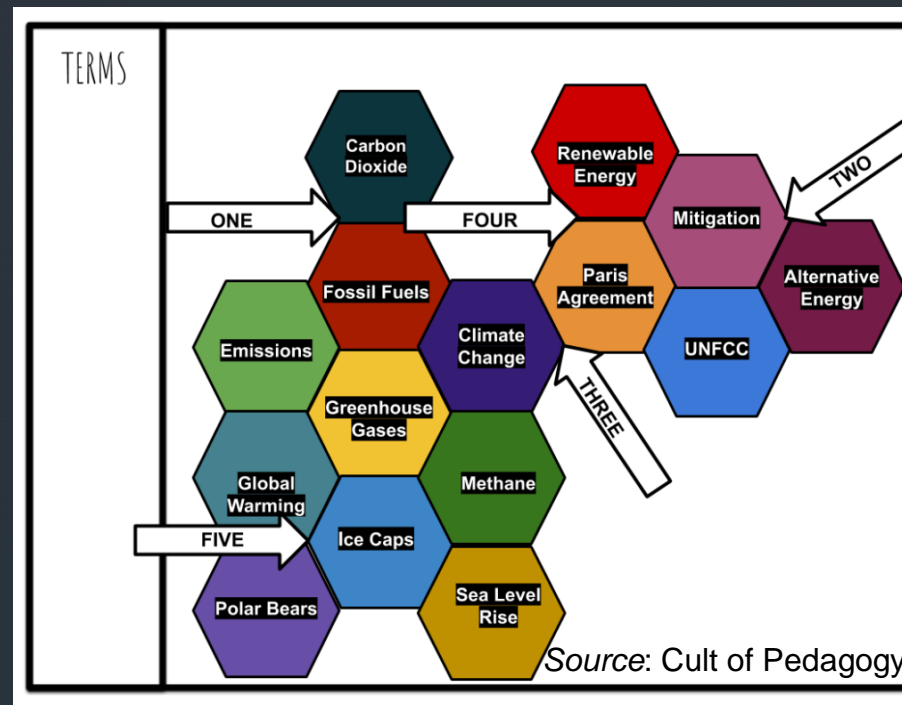
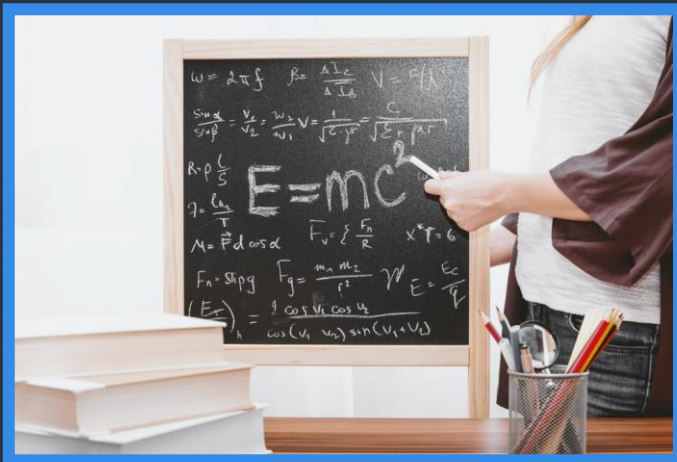


Math instruction needs to be personalized so that all learners can have their grade-level requirements fulfilled or gap reduced or closed, especially with serious learning losses. Schools can provide resources within their budgets. The following are useful platforms to assist schools, that have not developed their own:

1. (American system ) Edulastic Spark Math <https://edulastic.com/spark-math/> and Maths Space <https://mathspace.co/us>
2. (British system) 123 Maths <https://www.123maths.co.uk/> and Blutick (11-16) <https://blutick.com/about-us/>
3. (Multi-curricula/adaptable) Mathletics <https://www.mathletics.com/en/for-schools/curriculum/>

These are only few examples of mathematics programs. The need for such programs, in case they were not self-designed by school networks or public systems, is to provide instruction and assessment checkpoints in alignment with certain standards. They also serve to encourage mathematics learning and release fear and anxiety, especially during this time of different form of schooling.

# Science



This is a very effective strategy called “**Hexagonal Thinking**” that can be used in any class to enhance collaborative thinking, reaching more structured theme illustrations. This is essential at this stage when time is short, and more **synthesis and engagement** are needed in class to learn complex themes.

Learners receive hexagon shapes and terms, and they work **collaboratively** to label the hexagons in a way that relates the sub themes.

For online classes, hexagons can be sent to learners as a template to cut out earlier, then work on them, each from his home study area, through a whole class online discussion or breakout rooms. At the end, each learner will have his own hexagonal structure on a poster. They can also annotate the hexagons to give a more comprehensive view and ensure more understanding.

## Physical Education



**Physical education** is needed now more than ever not only for fitness, but also for challenges, such as obesity and mental health.

There is a variety of exercises, such as the **regular fitness movements**, weightlifting (using items at home, such as bottles), stretching (using towels), simple football dribbling, sock dribbling and juggling, dancing to music. Some schools provide jump ropes or hula hoops or ask parents to provide.

**Yoga** is another form of stretching and breathing. This form of exercises helps tremendously with mental health as well.

A third form can be an **outdoor walk or a hike**, but it is given as an assignment to be recorded in terms of minutes by a parent/guardian.


Most importantly, ensuring that school policies and **safety rules** are highly monitored and already approved before online PE sessions are conducted, and that parents/guardians are informed in case of any new activity, that might be challenging to some learners.

## Art



According to research, art not only provides opportunities to create colorful drawings and engage learners, but also creates opportunities for children to express more than what teachers know about them. *Self-expression is so important during these times.*

When teachers assign or give learners the freedom to work on a certain topic, there will be a great chance to know what those learners are thinking about, what interest them, and more urgently, what scares them or what makes them anxious and uncomfortable. Teachers, who can detect those hidden areas in the drawings or artwork, can take urgent matters further to the class teacher or the social worker.

A stack of smooth, light-colored stones, possibly river stones, is arranged in a balanced, conical shape on a dark, textured surface. The stones vary in size and are stacked in a way that creates a sense of stability and balance. The background is a dark, gradient color, and the overall lighting is soft and focused on the stones.

Focus Urgency

III

# Alignment



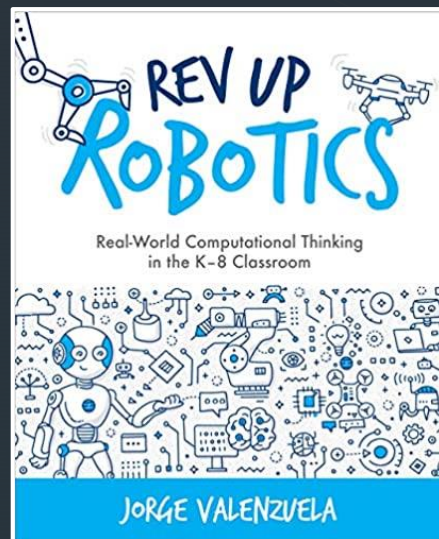
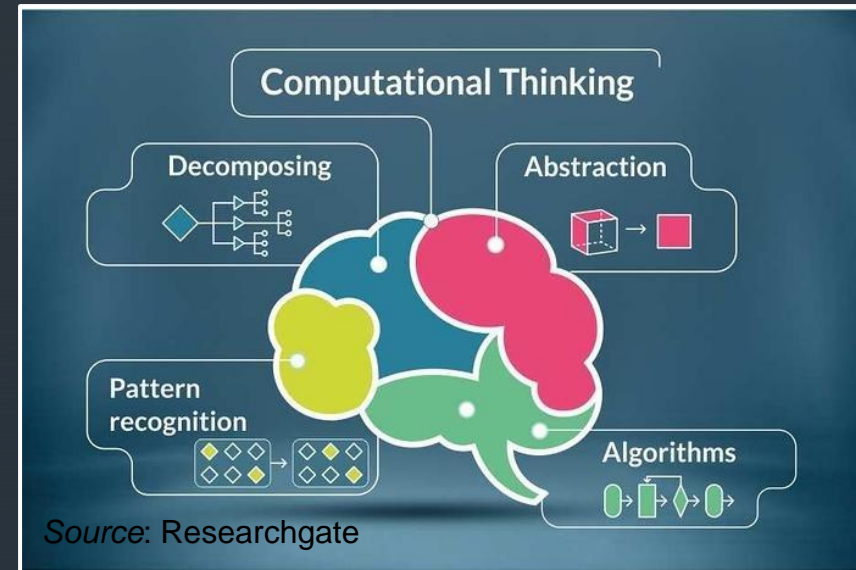


## ***TO SCHOOL STATEMENT***


- Is the school leadership still closely monitoring the **well-being** of its stakeholders?  
(Few schools lose the momentum of serious procedures after a time of stability)
- What practical steps are leaders taking in their focus on **values**?
- To what extent **pedagogy** is directed towards engaging all learners through different disciplines?
- To what extent is leadership attending to **activities** that activate and inspire learners so that they give their full potential?
- Are schools by any means **excluding** learners, such as those with difficulties?
- Are leaders planning to incorporate more **staff training**, especially online teaching and computer science basics?

- ▶ This digital age and **education 3.0 through 4.0**, schools are expected to incorporate computational thinking in their teaching and learning.

These can be integrated in all subjects and in simple ways that all teachers can understand and implement. Teachers do not have to be proficient in technology so in this case, **training** for basic levels is enough for non-IT teachers and highly recommended.



Experiencing **computational artifacts** is an essential skill for learners of this digital age. Jorge Valenzuela's Rev Up Robotics book is a highly-recommended book, that can help in real-life learning.



Focus Urgency

IV


# Inclusion



One of the best ways to ensure **inclusion and equity** is that teachers conduct a survey for their learners at this end/beginning of the terms. The survey can include questions for **feedback and improvement**, such as:

- Is the learner excited about (Teacher's) class?
- Is the learner usually called upon by the (Teacher)?
- Can the learner always feel there is something challenging in class?
- Are the assignments overloading or suitable for the learner?
- Does the learner feel comfortable asking questions in whole class discussions?
- Does the learner feel comfortable during pair work/breakout rooms?
- Does the learner feel that the grading/scoring is fair and valid?
- Is the learner given a chance to articulate his/her needs respectively?

What is important is that **ALL** learners submit their feedback, and that analysis of survey and action steps are planned accordingly.

A silver key and a green paper keychain are placed on a corkboard background. The key is on the left, and the green paper keychain is on the right. The text 'Focus Urgency' is written in white on the green paper, and 'Home Cooperation' is written in blue over the entire image.

Focus Urgency

v

Home  
Cooperation



Sending a survey again at the end/beginning of this term can include questions for **feedback and improvement**, such as:

- How effective is the learning (in-person or blended)?
- How valid are the assessment processes and procedures?
- Are parents giving their children a chance to articulate their needs ?(Some parents consider that children's opinions are invalid or waste of study time)
- Have they noted any kind of disorder in the children's attitudes/behaviors that might be helpful to share with the school? (Disorders include anxiety, fears, embarrassment, home anger, internet addiction, even eating disorder)

"Our bodies aren't wired to withstand overly frequent or intense stress. Over time, it affects not just you, as a parent, but your children,"

-Parenting expert Mark Bertin, M.D.

Social Emotional well-being, just like academic well-being, cannot be fully achieved during these hard times. However, every small step can count for better experiences.

**Learner and Teacher**

# Social-Emotional Support



## **LEARNERS**

Distance-learning, which “lacks social cues that humans usually rely on to perceive and learn (Murphy, 2020), awakening students' **authentic interest** becomes even more important.”

Therefore, learners will easily feel discouraged and sometimes anxious and silent.

Using **icebreaking activities** more often and **movement**, even during online learning to trigger excitement and instill excitement.

This will ease as much stress as possible so that when other issues arise, they will be of less impact.





## **TEACHERS**

It has been such a long and busy term for teachers. Many have reported fatigue and naturally, this comes from excessive use of the internet. Studies about technology and the brain reactions to it, an interesting article revealed the reason why people are showing **fatigue symptoms** after zoom calls – educators, business practitioners, and even family calls.

<https://www.brainfacts.org/neuroscience-in-society/tech-and-the-brain/2020/this-is-why-you-get-zoom-fatigue-092320>

“Zoom” does not necessarily relate to Zoom platform only. Any platform, which naturally embeds lots of visual data will cause the same thing.

That’s why at this stage, teachers are highly advised to finish their tasks of this term and take a **break away from devices**, as much as they can, to give the brain and the eyes the chance to recover from that fatigue.



As 2020 ends, with all its dramatic challenges, we cherish our resilience and achievements, and make a choice of moving forward and flying high!

Take time during the vacation first to

rest, rest, and rest !

Then detect what weighs you down,, choose to drop it so you can fly high !

**Manal Zeineddine**

**GLOBAL EDUCATION INFLUENCE  
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
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[www.orbitsdevelopment.com](http://www.orbitsdevelopment.com)

[info@orbitsdevelopment.com](mailto:info@orbitsdevelopment.com)  
[manal.zd@gmail.com](mailto:manal.zd@gmail.com)