

Reflections from Supervision Amid a Pandemic

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It is mid-March 2021, almost the exact date a year from when I was observing a high school English Language Arts class in-person, and I am itching to walk around. Sitting in a pandemic purchased chair at my makeshift desk at home, I login to join a Zoom class and I am greeted by one of my student teachers. My eyes focus on a familiar red stuffed animal sitting on a shelf behind her right shoulder. “Hello. The students should be arriving shortly.” As I wait, I notice my herb garden and some flowers on my windowsill behind me. Within seconds, twenty-plus boxes of student pictures with a muted microphone next to each name arrive on screen.

Nearly overnight, we found ourselves adapting to a new normal: constantly worrying about loved ones, balancing life-at-home, and teaching and learning in “*Brady Bunch*” boxes. At first, I must admit, it was alarming. We all thought it: *If cameras and videos are off, are the students even there? And more importantly, are students learning?*

But as we adjusted to (a)synchronous learning over time and with firsthand experience, we also remembered the significance of collaborative conversations and mentorship. Imagine a kindergartener who sheepishly looks off camera to receive the correct response from her uncle; a third grader whose video must be turned off to be able to hear and contribute to the class discussion due to unreliable Wi-Fi connections; or high school-aged students who are simultaneously supporting their younger siblings with school work and/or parents financially with a job. Teachers acknowledged that they were aware of these inequities and demands placed upon our students, but during the pandemic, teachers consistently expressed that they are now more conscious of students’ home lives and specific living situations than before.

Even in a virtual context, we are still connecting with our students and families and I hope that we do not lose sight of the importance of building and fostering strong and personal relationships to support the academic and non-academic learning and growth of all our students. And as for students like that kindergartener, we are grateful to be reminded of the importance of making connections to build trust and collaborative partnerships because in the end we all do want the same thing for our children: love, growth, and opportunities.

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