

Dr. Arman Taghizadeh: How can we teach through something we never learned?

FolioCollaborative Town Hall: May 1, 2020

Questions for the audience to consider and respond to later:

- How can you teach through something that you've never learned?
- Given your experience right now as an administrator, what advice would you give a first year teacher?

What has been the biggest challenge for you, as a school administrator, educator and as a person, through all of this?

Audience Participation:

- Getting the students to work their best while not pushing them too much; finding the balance between engaging them and acknowledging the emotional side of school right now
- Challenge of working with people who don't see the need to plan for this and are not realizing that they need to think about the ongoing implementation of distance learning aspects because this is part of our "new normal"
- Not seeing members of the department on a daily basis to check-in
- Distance Learning for elementary-age children
- Work and home are merged and seem the same
- Additional zoom meetings seem like "extra"
- Also balancing my kids' needs and my teaching and chair needs seems like a lot of work
- For virtual meetings - planning for the meeting first and then actually running the meeting feels like a lot - sort of like "prepping for a sub who is you"
- Helping teachers to stay motivated without the daily energy boost from students

This is a different sort of Spring than we're used to as educators.

Dr. T Speaking Points

- This is usually the time of year when we are able to see our students' growth and how far they've come - this was taken away.
- We are also usually preparing to say goodbye and close out the year - we're missing this opportunity to say goodbye and share how much love and affection we have for our students.
- As administrators, you've helped guide your faculty and students growth and you're not able to "see" this growth in the same way now, with the transition to distance learning

Audience Participation

- Many of our lower school students and faculty are very upset. No field day, end of year parties, field trips... These rites of passage are not happening. Jk-12 kids are struggling.

What things are your schools doing to create end of year closure virtually?

- Virtual spring musical!
- We are still planning. some senior events. today is a snow day for senior videos to livestream. other events are virtual.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● As a school faculty, we're used to reflecting on the progress that's been made - in our classrooms and as a school community - we are seeing the "light at the end of the tunnel" - that door has now been shut ● We need to recognize and acknowledge that there are a lot of emotions related to these changes - anger, sense of hopelessness - as we realize that we don't get to say goodbye, tell students and faculty how proud we are of them; that sense of closure has been unexpectedly and unfairly taken away; ● To add to that sense of loss and anger - we have had very little time process our loss; we have had to skip ahead and keep moving forward 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We are holding a US Coffee House tomorrow. Virtual honor day assemblies. Senior Celebration rather than Graduation which is rescheduled to Aug 8, Closing faculty meeting which will hopefully honor those who will be leaving, including a revered Interim Head of School ● Class meetings and virtual gatherings, virtual field day
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We are trying to fix something that is inherently broken and fundamentally changed.

<p>Dr. T Speaking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We don't want to think about what will happen, what we will do when we lose something - we avoid thinking about it. ● And then when it happens, we're not prepared and are therefore not available to process it. ● If you need to be upset, it's ok! If you need to set aside time each day to process it, then do so - set aside time. ● As a psychiatrist, one thing I've realized about grief is that it's so personal, so individual. It doesn't matter what you read in a book - you need to give yourself permission to grieve, allow your educators to understand that it's ok and that you understand and empathize with those feelings. ● Hearing from a lot of students about "feeling guilty about feeling guilty" - our students realize that they are generally very fortunate during these circumstances (food, shelter, security)- while this is true, we also need to make sure that they know - and we know - that they are still 	<p>Audience Participation</p> <p>What are things that you do to reflect on these emotions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● I have tried to encourage members of the department to focus on developing skills that are most likely to translate when we return. Try anything and be honest with your students about leaning into these new tools to make of it what we can. ● Struggling with how and where we allow time to process/grieve when everyone is so busy trying to adapt and teach? ● there is a whole range of feelings and emotions which occur hourly and daily ● I feel that it is a chance for us in math to focus on skills and not accuracy and content. ● A member of the admin team asked how I was doing from 1-10. I responded that it depends on the hour - what a rollercoaster this has been!
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<p>allowed to have feelings and a reaction to this situation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We talk about scheduling time for reflection and balance with our students - we need to do this with ourselves. There will always be work to do - we need to realize that by stopping to reflect, we're able to take a step back, see things more clearly, and make a plan. • Adults should also think about how we can model these lessons for our students - learning about how to navigate loss and grief and managing your own schedule. We can share our systems for navigating - these are great, transferable life skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this reminds me of 2001-2 and surviving NYC after the attacks - we are in a fog and hoping it clears.
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What advice would you give to a first year teacher?

<p>Dr. T Speaking Points</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Right now, everyone feels like a first year teacher. Teachers are all struggling to engage students, put together lesson plans, balancing personal and professional life, managing their own anxiety, managing students' anxiety, etc • Now we have to reinvent ourselves and figure it all out 	<p>Audience Participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always told them to try one thing at a time; pick one thing, be successful, and then try adding on • Be patient with yourself and never hesitate to ask questions. • We're all first year teachers now. Reach out and connect; learn from each other. • This is going to be hard and I am here to support you as much as I can. • It's ok to be vulnerable. It won't be perfect from class to class, year to year • https://www.cultofpedagogy.com/marigolds/ - Marigolds exist in our schools as well - encouraging, supporting and nurturing growing teachers on their way to maturity. If you can find at least one marigold in your school and stay close to them, you will grow. Find more than one and you will positively thrive. • Don't pretend you have it all together. Be open about the areas in which you are stretching! • Follow your nose. What interests you? Think about why that idea is valuable for kids.
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Reframing what it means to FAIL: First Attempt in Learning

Dr. T Speaking Points

- Fundamentals of Psychology: think of a triangle: Thoughts - Emotions - Behavior: thoughts directly affect emotions/feelings which directly affect behaviors and reverse
- A lot of teachers and administrators feel like they are failing right now.
- We all have similar definitions of what it means to fail.
- If we are feeling negative emotions, we need to recognize that it has an impact on our performance, on our behaviors.
- I am big on reframing things - we can choose to think of what “fail” means.
- I define FAIL as a first attempt in learning.
- If we think about something from a curious or engaged view, how does that impact our performance and our approach to our work?
- Michael Jordan example: “I have failed over and over and over again and that’s why I succeeded.”
- Coach Phil Jackson’s book [Eleven Rings](#) is a great account of this reframing approach
- Encourage teachers to be transparent with their students - model their struggles
- Reframe this as an opportunity, rather than an obstacle.
- Challenge yourself to be creative and engage kids - this is the time to show how amazing your school is - show why you’re the best, because you met this challenge - that’s how you elevate your school!
- For LS kids - challenge kids to read to each other over zoom - this also develops public speaking!
- For the MS level - this is a great real life history lesson - includes health, economics, psychology, etc
- For US students - opportunity to teach about mental health and wellness: balance,

Audience Participation

When you hear the word fail, what do you hear?

What’s the definition of failing to you?

- To fail is trying and not getting it. For me it is great. For others it is fear.
- To screw up and be embarrassed
- To try and not succeed
- Fail = Don’t achieve the expected outcome
- People are fraud or failure.
- Failure is giving up.

What are the emotions that go with the word fail?

- Being afraid
- Shame
- Frustration
- We think that others remember our failures and hold it against us... when it probably is just in our mind.

How would you define a first attempt in learning?

- it’s ok to mess up
- First step
- awesome. attempt is try. not limiting
- It is a journey, not a destination
- Opportunity

What kinds of emotions come with this reframing?

- Engagement
- Hope
- Curiosity

Comments

- The problem with failure is that there is not a lot of reflection on it. kids hide it by erasing or throwing it away.
- Read [Talent Code](#) and [Mathematical Mindsets](#) - really impacted my thinking
- Yes, Joe! We fail all the time. And then we own it and learn from it.
- I miss the 5-10 min of mindfulness I did in my classes every few days. hard to do online meets: great protocol from National School Reform

organization, managing their own schedules; this is a big area where they are struggling in college - this is a challenge now for them to learn these skills

Faculty that's a great way to start a class or meeting with mindfulness

<https://www.nsrharmony.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/TransitionsActivity.pdf>

As a school leader, how could you help a teacher get unstuck and manage their emotions better?

- Dr. T: validate their emotions and help them understand that it's a challenge versus an obstacle; help them brainstorm - ask "what can we do in this situation?" What do you think? How are you navigating this tough situation?"
- Leaders don't have to have all the answers and should work collaboratively with teacher to find solutions - this empowers them, shows empathy
- Say "in this situation, this feels like this is the best thing we can do" - remember that we need to work within limitations and things don't have to be perfect

How can we help students and teachers redefine their relationships with themselves and others? Embrace the suck.

Dr. T Speaking Points

- For difficult situations - we can run away from them or we can embrace them.
- The pandemic has presented us with a great time to reorganize our priorities - redefine your relationship with your family, close friends now that so much of our "business" is gone.
- Gratitude challenge - at the end of every day, share one thing for which you are grateful with an "accountability buddy," someone close to you to - share. This exercise helps to reframe how you go through your day - forces you to focus on the positive rather than negative things.
- "If you started off the year knowing that it would end in March, what would you do differently?"
- It's easy to be amazing when we have all the resources and few challenges - it's when things are hard that we need to show our worth.
- We always teach our students that adversity builds character. We, as the adults, need to be living this now.
- Neat idea: Zoom class picture!

Audience Participation

- Starting meetings with gratitude can be so energizing and it doesn't have to take a lot of time

How can we create accountability partners in this moment?

- Ask someone to be your partner. They will be grateful and feel more connected to you
- seems like this may be something that forces us to start the year better, as we don't know what will happen next year.

