Transcript - Transitioning back to school a social-emotional perspective

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Paul Ellis:
Hello and welcome to this webinar - our first on the topic of Transitioning back to school.

We are recording this when the majority of education establishments worldwide remain closed. The United Nations has estimated that 1.5 billion children and 63 million primary and secondary school teachers have been affected in 191 countries.

This week, schools in Hubei Province in China have begun to re-open their doors, and today, 6 May 2020, some 57,000 senior students have returned in Wuhan, the presumed epicentre of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Elsewhere, governments, school leaders, teachers, parents and children are also thinking about what will be the impact of schools re-opening.

In future webinars and resources, we will be looking at returning to school from an academic and curricular point of view, but in this webinar we are going to reflect on transitioning back to school from a social-emotional perspective.

As a number of educators have been sharing on social media: we have to Maslow before we Bloom.

My name is Paul Ellis. I am the Head of Teaching and Learning at Cambridge Assessment International Education.

Our guest presenter for this webinar is Amanda Kirby, Professor of Development Disorders in Education. She is CEO of Do-IT Solutions, which provides screening and assessment tools for children and adults and focuses especially on ascertaining the strengths of those who are neurodivergent and how we can support them.

Amanda has spoken in the past at three of our Cambridge Schools' Conferences on the theme of Creating the Conditions for Success and has recently written a blog for us on the inclusive benefits of lockdown learning.

I will now hand over to her to take you through the rest of this webinar. Welcome Amanda.

Amanda Kirby: Thank you very much Paul. Hello to everybody. What I'm going to be talking about is transitioning back or moving forward to school and I want to reflect on, when we go back to school, what can we learn from this extraordinary and challenging experience that many of us will have had across the world.

So I'm going to take you through my reflections and really think about practically what we can do.

So let me start my slides.

This is me, and Paul's talked a little bit about me and this is me when I when I was at work, and probably not as I quite look like at the moment, reverting to myself in a professional way but working from home and isolated and for many of us this will have been an abrupt change, moving to home, home and school working at this time.

So what I hope to do in this session is to talk about preparing for return and what do we know and look at the evidence base from other experiences globally; identifying students with additional challenges before and now – what might have changed and who are they? And then thinking about building resilience, looking forward in a positive way and then considering some tips and resources that can help.

So, what can we learn from other natural disasters? We need to be prepared for tomorrow today and that's really important, and we can learn from experiences globally of what's actually occurred and what people have learnt from those experiences over time.

Now is Covid-19 a natural disaster? Yes, I think it is. This is a definition: "An event which is outside the realm of everyday experience, affects a large number of people, and causes damage serious enough to impose demands or threats which exceed the victims' resources and ability to cope can be classified as a disaster" and I do believe that Covid-19, globally, has been a natural disaster.

So when we go to the evidence and the research, we can go back to post disaster research and I think one of the things [that] is encouraging in some ways [is] that this is not new, that we have had disasters, natural disasters, going back hundreds of years. But actually what we can learn about is what's worked and how do we support people. What's actually happened afterwards in a positive way? So we can reflect on those things.

And if we look back to Spanish flu in 1918 (and this is a picture of people with face masks on at that time) and you think that we're talking about whether we wear face masks or we don't wear face masks and you think of that time, this was a picture a hundred years ago.

So what we do know from this is that after this, things got better. Countries revived and we went on to live very normal lives once again. So, even though natural disasters happen, we are resilient as global nations.

We're going to pick up on a few of those disasters and what happened educationally during those times and what we've learned from the research that went back and {when we} questioned the parents, the teachers and some of the pupils as well. And I think that's really important to take some of that learning and bring it into today and

that includes the Aberfan disaster in Wales in the UK in 1966, the Sri Lankan tsunami in 2004, hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Chinese earthquake in Beichuan in 2008, and the Japanese earthquake and tsunami in 2011, and the New Zealand earthquakes in Christchurch in 2011.

What we do know is that people have moved forward and moved forward successfully afterwards and we can learn from that.

So if I start with Aberfan in South Wales: Aberfan was a coal mining village and what actually happened there, the coal mine actually collapsed and all the slate fell through the village of Aberfan and actually covered the whole school. It was a tragic disaster where 116 children and 28 adults died, they couldn't get out of the school at all. And after that people looked at what was the impact for that town, that village, and also the children and families connected, and in 1972 Lacey et al evaluated that 56 children and their parents had been referred to child guidance clinics.

The clinical impressions indicated that children exhibited emotional difficulties secondary to the disaster. So those who survived had some emotional impact, as you can imagine.

The author also observed that the children who were most affected had other anxiety-creating events in their background and I think this is really important, that we look at cumulative adversity. It wasn't necessarily all the children but it was actually specifically those that had a number of grief situations in their families' past and I think there is an interesting learning point we can take from that.

In 2005, let's roll on and look at hurricane Katrina. So hurricane Karina, there was no access to online learning and children missed seven weeks of school. We have to think about how long actually children have missed school at this present time. How big a learning gap has there really been?

When the city was evacuated, many families suffered a period of instability. A report was published nine months after the storm that found that families had moved an average of three and a half times in the first nine months. So you think about this stability of housing for parents and families and those children. One in five school-age children were either not enrolled in school or were only partially attending and they'd missed more than 10 days a month, so even after the event there were gaps in learning.

So, who's at greatest risk after a disaster? Is it all the children or is it actually just some of the children, and how do we know which children they may be?

Well we do know from hurricane Katrina and we know from the earthquake in New Zealand as well where more intense studies have been done in the last few years that, not surprisingly, those in poverty were strongly related to be more vulnerable during and after hurricane Katrina and also it looks like children at certain developmental stages, and in New Zealand it was found that those children who were 2 years old at the time of the earthquakes, were more affected so there may be developmentally sensitive periods and we don't know whether that might be in adolescence when the brain is changing considerably.

We haven't done this work, so some of it we're going to have to find out but some of it we can go back to the research to look at what we already know.

What we do know, from a really robust study published in 2010 looking at hurricane Katrina, it was a long term study and followed up children and families afterwards, that the number of stressors contributed to poorer recovery three years after the disaster and I think that's really important that we grab that; this is about cumulative adversity not necessarily just, in inverted commas, being exposed to Covid-19.

So ongoing concerns about the family, parental distress, the existence of multiple losses including the loss of home and jobs, separation from family and friends, and you can start to see a picture that for some families at this present time they may well have had loss of family members, illness, seen parental stress and had multiple losses of family and friends and certainly loss of job and for some loss of housing as well.

So, what do we know about missing school?
We're all worried about that and the impact on education for the children who have missed school but should we be worrying significantly at this point in time?

Well the good news is in Christchurch, Professor Hattie did some work in 2011 and said where there was no access to online learning like we've seen in some places in the world today, the students' performance actually went up in the final exams and Hattie said that the difference was that teachers focused on what has to be learned and I'm going to come back to that.

Instead of getting through the whole curriculum thinking we have to cover everything, the teachers came back and were very focused on what the children needed to learn to get them through the exams and maybe we need to reflect on that when we move children back into school especially those at times of exams.

But the reality is that schools are run very differently around the world.

We often think that children are at school the same time, the same length of days, the same number of days but actually when you look at the comparison, it's really very different. And if you look at this comparison, which I think is quite useful, of school day duration in two countries, you've got China that's got long breaks during the day but longer overall hours and Brazil, much shorter days, five hours a day, starting earlier in the morning and finishing at lunchtime, really, when in China children are having a break and then they're coming back so actually when we're thinking about lost school days we can't just say they've all lost five days because actually the school day and the way it's structured is very different from country to country. So the impact on learning might well be able to be concentrated in a different way.

Also the school term times, so where our terms are and how they're structured, for instance in the UK we have three main term times but in other countries it's structured in a completely different way. But the total term days are very different: 230 in Japan compared to 160 in France so when we say lost days and lost hours we really need to be thinking about the quality of what we're doing perhaps not the quantity. Think about how we can focus when we take children back to school and what is truly important.

The other thing is class size and we know that there is big debate over the quality of teaching depending on class size but it may be when we're doing staggered classrooms or we're structuring how we're teaching we might need to think about

class size and whether this actually has an impact or not at this time, especially if we're focusing on specific children who are at higher risk.

The length of education again varies considerably from Australia and the UK, up to 18, to Kenya 14/15. So we've got big differences in the number of years that children are experiencing being at school.

So we can't say there is one solution here in that sense. So what we know is the impact is going to vary. It's going to vary with vulnerability and the agency of children and what I mean about that is what are the underlying issues that might be present in those children prior to Covid and after Covid and what's happened during this time. And also the agency of children, opportunities for them to be able to ask for help, support they've got during this time if they required it. What support do they have from their families, from their community so the impact will vary from a number of these different variables.

What opportunities have they gained? And for some children, we'll highlight that in a moment, actually the opportunities gained, and this will reflect on whether also they had challenges before, so were there underlying issues before and how are they going to present now?

So the picture of the child that you might have been concerned about previously may still be concerning but there may be other children that may have been under the radar but actually now present themselves in a number of different ways.

Who do we need to think about?

I think this is really important. We've got three key audiences we need to consider and the first has to be you the educators.

For you to gain confidence and to be able to have a plan and talk to the parents and the parents gain confidence in the words you're saying and your actions you need to look after yourself as well and this is really important and sometimes looking after ourselves and growing our own resilience and our own well-being is incredibly important.

I think if you're working in groups and in schools, it's to share some of that vulnerability together so that you can feel supported.

Then the interaction between the teacher, the learner and the parents is essential. Parents will feel confident to bring their children back to school when they see that there is a plan in place, even if the plan changes, I think that's important, we know that things might change and alter over time but actually having a plan and communicating it is essential.

Now we all come in different shapes and sizes and that means our children are arriving at school with different levels of support, different levels of ability as well and so the solution is not going to be a one size fits all at all.

So what is your transition plan? I don't think it can be the same for all and previously you would have been thinking about inclusive processes and thinking about how you support each individual child perhaps but also a whole class and a whole school approach.

This is a little more complex because the children we have identified before, there might actually now be some other groups that are going to come and in who require different types of support and I'm going to highlight those groups.

So I think there are six potential groups of students.

The first, the ones that really won't need a great deal of support – they're coping, they're resilient, they're well supported - they were before and they will [be] after. That's probably going to be the bulk of children, who will spring back into the systems that you're putting your children back in to or new systems that are being been created.

I am concerned about this new group, this group of individuals (number two) are groups of learners that have had no obvious challenges before but have experienced illness, loss in self or others during Covid-19 might be now a more vulnerable group.

Number three is the pre-identified neurodiverse group of children and learners. They may already have been identified as having autism spectrum disorder, ADHD, dyslexia, anxiety, dyspraxia, speech and language challenges, they may already be identified and may already have been given specific support.

You're going to have those children flagged already because you already know about them but they may be more vulnerable now, because we know the association between neurodiversity and anxiety overlaps often so these children are more likely to have heightened anxiety than prior to Covid-19.

Number 4 is the vulnerable but often missed and misunderstood group and these are children that often go under the radar.

They don't quite meet a threshold to get a diagnosis of something but they may be turned off by education, they might find it harder to concentrate, some children are in care, they might be moved around a system, they might have opted out of education altogether. In the UK we use the term 'alternative provision', they may have been excluded from school but they're vulnerable because of their behaviours and their behaviours are not always understood.

It's important for this group, if we go back to the research we saw from hurricane Katrina and from Christchurch, is this vulnerable group that just comes under the radar, may be bobbing above it now and we need to really be thinking about those children and we've got new kids that really need to have additional attention.

Then you've got number five, these are children who are neurodiverse and had illness and loss during Covid-19, so you're starting to see this picture of cumulative adversity and going back to that research, that's what we're saying, where there were multiple areas where children were at greater risk.

And number six, those who are the most challenging, those who have got cumulative adversity, are those that are vulnerable, they've got illness, they might have low socioeconomic status, they might have poor housing, lack of IT access, they may have been witness to domestic violence and had poorer nutrition and have parental loss of employment as well and I think this group is really important that we actually recognise as it's likely that this group is going to have a long term impact from Covid-

19 on their educational outcomes and also their employment outcomes.

There are important differences between lessons learned and lessons acted on so we can take this information that we've understood, we can look at the research and we go ok what do we do? We need a plan. And Redlener was the director of the National Centre for Disaster Preparedness at Columbia University and he said "the goal is not to achieve the pre-event normal", we're not going back to the way it was, "but rather to achieve a new normal with better infrastructure and stability", not façade recovery - so we're not just taking off the dust covers and carrying on as we are, we need to learn from this time and say ok what do we do from that, what are the lessons that we can learn from this to move on to do better and I think that Build Back Better is really important.

So Build Back Better is a concept that I think is really important. It's used in things like disaster recovery, when we're thinking about recovery, rehabilitation and reconstruction and I think this is a really appropriate phrasing for what we're thinking about in education too.

So what we do know that when we've got children coming back and if you go back to that and if you reflect back on what lessons have been learned is that actually if we focus on what is important at this point for these children and it might be different for different-aged children at different stages we focus on the now and what will make the most difference. So if children have got exams coming up and they need study skills and they need to know the information for those specific exams perhaps we have to go "we're not doing everything but were going to do specific things to help you to get through this point in time."

When we've got children who are transitioning perhaps going from one school to another at particular breaks around the world that's at different ages and stages but thinking about good endings and good beginnings will make a difference, how can we help with those transition points which might be culturally important for those individuals?

So what about you, as an individual and an educator? I think this is crucial, that we really support our educators at this point. This is the starting point for transition. If you're not looked after how can you create a plan and how can you execute it?

We need to think about what your experiences are. You are an individual and you may have experienced loss, grief and feel fearful. Talking to thousands of people over the last few weeks, what I hear is people have waves of emotion, waves of anxiety and then they focus and regroup and they carry on and they focus on what they need to do. But we need to accept that you may have had challenging experiences personally yourself.

You may also have had positive gains and also new skills and experiences.

So your losses - you may well have been ill yourself or known someone ill and that could be really challenging. You may have elderly relatives that you weren't able to visit or relatives that sadly have died. So you might be grieving at this time while you're trying to cope with your work as well.

You might have had personal losses, people in your family might have lost their jobs. You may have lost or be at risk from losing your home and the financial impact may

be quite hard as well and certainly we've seen the emotional impact with some people being particularly increasingly anxious during this time, not surprisingly.

The good thing is though you might have had some gains. Some people have flipped the classroom and actually done amazing work, home schooling online and you might have developed some new IT skills that you never realised you had.

You might have been participating with other teachers, pulling resources together. From across the world I've seen some fantastic things including things like virtual museums and going round zoos across the world there may be things you've done and seen and shared you can bring back to the classroom now when you return.

You might have gained an insight into learners in your classroom; who has actually come up with some great new ideas, who's really engaged in a way that might have been surprising to you? And you might have been delivering your resources in lots of different ways. I've seen some schools delivering home packs with bubble wrap and paper and scissors and things for children to do work at home.

Lots of different ways not just online but offline as well, you might have seen a lot of gains.

The other thing you might have experienced yourself personally is balancing home and work, I've seen lots of people amazingly balancing, doing their teaching while having their children and their dogs running around and it's pretty chaotic but amazingly wonderful and you may have been having to balance home and work and you might have actually learned from your own children too. Those experiences of being a teacher to your children might have opened up a window of understanding that you might not have had open before.

So that's you, we need to think about you and think about yourself but what about the students and again they may have exhibited loss, grief, fears, they may have had gains and they may have had new skills and experiences.

As an individual we need to be thinking about what was their baseline before so were they more vulnerable? How engaged were they in education? Could we actually be thinking about, actually have they been more engaged at this time, how can we really think about the things that are interesting to them, how can we bring that learning back into the classroom?

Did they have any learning challenges before and what support was in place from their parents, from the community from healthcare professionals, what sort of structure and within school itself.

What information have you had from the parents about their child's experience during Covid, do you know about anxiety or loss; and what has been positive, and I think that's really important for the learner, what can we learn when we come back to the classroom?

The gains for lots of learners might be the opportunity to be learning not formally, not following that curriculum but doing things that they're interested in, finding things online, exploring, reading books. Talking to grandparents about things that have happened to them when they were children as well, reflecting on what it was like perhaps if they'd had similar experiences, being contained during a war for example.

New skills such as ICT they may be really learning because we've flipped and they've engaged with ICT and have tools they can bring back.

Have they been communicating effectively with their friends, with their family, with schools as well online, and can we be bringing that, have they spoken to and connected more widely, more globally during this time?

Have they also learned new skills at home, out of necessity or interest such as cookery, doing more craft, gardening, growing things and perhaps they might have been looking after their siblings as well.

New skills they can bring back into education include perhaps knowing a lot about viruses after this time. There's new language that we didn't have three, four, five months ago such as social distancing, so what do these things mean to them. What does a virtual learning platform mean and how can they use it? And what's their experience of coping with being without friends? And we can learn from these things to grow and reflect about how do we move forward.

Their well-being - well some children as I said who are neurodivergent might have greater fears, phobias and may be more socially isolated. For some children ironically actually being at home, being secure, with less demands on them socially, for some children perhaps with autism spectrum disorder this has been an easier time for them, a less stressful time but for other children they might have felt very socially isolated away from their friends and not connected. So it's going to be variable.

What about their parents? This triangle of the learner, the parents and yourselves is really important and again they may have had loss, grief and fears and they may have anxieties about going back to work themselves when they've been at home and felt safe and secure to some extent. They may have concerns about school and how it's going to work and how their children are going to be safe too. So this bridge between the parents and the school is really important.

But we do have a digital and social divide. We talk about connectedness as if it is a standard thing across the globe and it certainly isn't. And we do see a lack of or intermittent connectivity, we see people relying on pay-as-you-go phones rather than having continuous connections on smart phones or no computer access.

We also see some children who do not have good nutritional wellbeing at this time and we also sadly see children as well [who are] lacking the emotional support they require.

In 2019 a report citing Sirimanne of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development and she noted the number of people using the internet exceeded half of the world's population in 2018 with 80% of Europeans having access compared to less than 25% in Sub-Saharan Africa. And we need to remind ourselves, even at this time when we're doing a webinar like this, half the world's population remains offline and excluded from the benefits of digitalisation. So there is a digital gap.

So what do parents of children with ADHD and autism spectrum disorder, dyslexia and dyspraxia say has changed? I went out to ask them, on Twitter and online to gather information and ideas about what it's been like for them. I think we can learn a lot listening to the voices of parents and children.

What has changed for them? I wanted to reflect on what has changed individually for their child, what's changed about the environment that they're now in, now that they're at home working rather than actually going back and forth to school and perhaps what's also changed in terms of tasks.

What we've seen in the press, in a number of papers globally is that for some children this time has been good for them. They've actually benefitted from online learning, they've actually felt more relaxed and less anxious and I think we need to think about what does that mean when we're asking children to return and what can we learn from that?

So here are some quotes from parents and I think what's really important when we listen to this is just to reflect on what we could actually learn from this:

"My son is so much happier. He's not worrying about getting into trouble for fidgeting, walking around, getting distracted, poor presentation, distracting others, losing stuff."

"For my own children a slower pace, lots of breaks, a calm and quiet atmosphere and managing their own learning has all been beneficial."

"Setting her own schedule. Mixing up academic work with physical activity. She appreciates short videos and then work assigned on the software. It doesn't take an hour per subject anymore. Using tech but not feeling different."

"Mirroring school days as much as possible has helped. Structured learning plan has worked best in terms of subjects/topics; timings have been more flexible (start/end). Contact with teachers online has helped, being able to get clarity on homework and maintain concentration." And this child has autism and ADHD.

Now if you just think about that, we're talking about some things that can be done in the classroom; more frequent breaks, allowing children who perhaps find it difficult to focus not to expect them to focus for too long and then be disappointed - so structuring the work in chunks and allowing that child and all children to stretch out and perhaps move around.

These are small things that are not costly but actually could be implemented in a classroom structure.

"Benefitted hugely from having no time constraints. He is much calmer and actually starting to initiate some things we'd usually have to prompt him on (e.g. taking meds, getting ready for dog walk)"

"My son is much happier. He's not worrying about getting into trouble for fidgeting, walking around, getting distracted, poor presentation, distracting others, losing stuff."

"From a third level perspective live online lectures are recorded to be replayed later at intervals to match attention with pause and replay feature."

"Slower pace. No rushing. Lots of breaks."

"No itchy school uniform or uncomfortable chairs, peace and quiet" - so we're seeing the environment makes a difference to children's behaviour. It reduces their anxiety, it allows them to perhaps be more creative and be more focused and concentrate for longer. And again we hear this: "My son has been calm and relaxed and been sleeping much better. Less headaches, more focused"

"He's almost anxiety free at home. Still worries about getting things wrong in his learning but we limit to 2 hours over 4 hour periods and support him with choices."

So opening up the opportunities to choose what you do and how you do it and giving time and breaks, we're seeing this is reducing the anxiety. Changing the way that children can deliver their outputs can really make a difference too.

We're seeing if we don't get emotion right, we can't get learning right too.

And also the impact is a positive one on creativity. We're hearing from parents that one child taught herself to ride her bike, "short bursts of really engaged attention followed by movement and lots of time in the fresh air, my son's sleeping better, bonding with siblings", so better relationships.

"My child is 14 and I think the biggest learning curve has been tolerance", so being able to get on with other children.

"Creativity has worked for my child. That and having the time to work creatively into her other tasks." So exactly helping to think about inclusive ways of learning that allow all children to engage. So this is something I think we can really learn.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery said," A goal without a plan is just a wish."
So we do need a plan. We know we're going to get children back into education but that plan needs to have some clarity even if it is changing.

But what we need to understand really more about is what have we learned from these experiences – are we teaching to children or actually now are we learning with children? We're learning from our own experiences, we're learning from their experiences. How do we bring that back so we're really thinking about Build Back Better?

What has been the most valuable learning experience for your students and perhaps this is what you want to reflect [on] when you engage with them again. What was worth learning? What was one of the most interesting things you learned? What can be used now and transferred into classroom practice? What does the classroom look like? What engaged your learners most?

So you might find [out] things about that learners that were disengaged, they're coming back and bringing new ideas that they've explored during this time and we need to listen to that.

But first of all we need to get prepared.

We need time I think for the teachers to prepare for re-entry. I can't see teachers going back to school on day one and the children arriving on day one. We do need to prepare resources and [have] a thought on how we're going to be supporting these different groups of learners, thinking about those six groups I talked about earlier. A

phased return is being talked about quite a lot in a number of different countries. We need to be thinking about what we've learned from those children about maximising choice and control where possible, and reflect on what's worked for individuals and how we could use that effectively.

I do think what's really important when we're thinking about transitioning, is maybe thinking about good endings and good beginnings. And in some schools they're starting to think about whether actually coming back, even if it's the beginning of next year your schools are opening, is almost you do an end of one year one week so children can say goodbye, they can close the door on those relationships before they move on to their new school or to their new class so there is closure in what has gone on.

This might be really helpful in actually helping reduce anxiety and dealing with what's gone in the past and be able to explore and talk about that during that time. So good endings, and then a good beginning.

Keeping parents informed is going to be really important. Creating structure is really important for parents to feel safe that their children can go to school even if it's going to change, which it's likely to do, but keeping them informed and part of that process.

Letting the parents know of any staff changes and providing names and pictures to prepare their children. What different classrooms there might be, the different layout, the more information you can share with parents the less anxious your children are going to be when they return. Let parents have timetables or lunch choices if you have lunch in school, visual timetables to help reinforce classes for especially a neurodiverse student, students who may have difficulties with language and communication. And really thinking about what we've learned during this time across the world often has been that we've strengthened our community interactions. How can we work with parents to continue that process?

What we do know from the research is that "children's physical and emotional relationships with their communities are vital in the recovery process and play a significant role in determining outcomes." And we know that "school-based interventions are very effective at reaching children and identifying and responding to vulnerable children and families." So getting them back in to a school environment is really important. Once parents are feeling confident, they can go on and rebuild their own lives and get back into work without also having to worry about looking after their children. So this is a crucial partnership.

In school, well when they get back to school we need to find common experiences among your learners and this might be touchpoints where we're not competing, we're not going "my experience was better or worse than yours", but actually sharing that we've all had different experiences which are valued and valuable. We need to prioritise relationships, we need to be thinking about Maslow first at this point.

Creating new groups through shared experiences as well, you might be bringing people together, some learners who might have had certain loss and want to share their experiences. And focus on what is most important for those specific groups.

In some places we're starting to think about peer mentoring programmes where perhaps we've got really resilient students who might help support those younger students who might be less resilient and need more support. It might be helpful for

the older students who are resilient to be enhancing their skills and also helpful for those children that are being supported.

We need to foster wellness and build resilience, this is really important at this time. How do we reflect that after, if you think about 1918 and the Spanish flu, that actually across the globe we built up, we moved on and then we carried on in a really normal fashion but we learnt things from those experiences.

We do need to take care of physical wellbeing and build that into everyday practice. That's really important to get children moving, for some of them lockdown might mean they have been contained and really have had very little exercise during this time.

We could be bringing in practising mindfulness in actions and words, for some it might mean mindfulness in terms of meditation and doing children's yoga but in other ways for some children it's easier to do mindfulness in actions, in journaling, painting, gardening, movement as well.
So we'd have to think what's appropriate for the children.

Can we reintroduce the balance of natural disaster and nature? Can we reflect with our children that actually nature has gone on during this time very much and even though this is a natural disaster we can learn from being immersed in nature. What have they learnt? Some of the children might have been gardening and been going out when doing their exercise, going out and seeing the world in a different way. Can we bring this learning back into school and really think about opportunities for immersive natural experiences because we can see that can help emotion as well.

Finally, really, there is thinking about building resilience and resilience is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. And this certainly has been a time of tragedy, significant sources of stress and adversity. But we can learn from this and this is something we can bring back into school and help our children to become more resilient for their futures.

Martin Seligman who is really the 'strengths man' from the States uses the term 'PERMA':

Positive emotions and celebrating things that have gone right today so we can build resilience in our children.

Engagement – finding activities that allow them to be in the flow – get lost in the moment and be fully engaged.

Strengthening those relationships, really important,

And taking meaning in what has happened and reflecting on what you've learned, this is really important for resilience. For ourselves as well, what have you been surprised about that actually you've learned during this time that maybe you didn't think you were as strong as you are.

Accomplishment – mastering one new skill and celebrating this, however small.

So bringing that into the classroom, what has somebody learned, what skill have they gained? Let's celebrate that so they can see that they've actually been more resilient, and reflecting on it.

So what can we learn today in case it happens again tomorrow? And as you've seen, natural disasters happen but actually we build up and we learn.

"Perhaps we need a vision of education that's more "future wise", reflecting our best guesses about what's more likely to happen and foregrounding flexible knowledge likely to inform whatever does happen", this was David Perkins talking about Future Wise: Educating our Children for a Changing World. We need to be thinking about what education is for, for the future and this is an opportunity to do that reflection now.

"In teaching for truly life-worthy learning, might we hope to teach for wisdom?" and I think this reflection, thinking about resilience, thinking about what we've learned really is thinking about wisdom and what education is about.

Finally, a couple of things: I think we need to listen to the voice of our children and this was what children said to say to parents post Katrina, and I think it's amusing in some ways but actually poignant that we should need to listen to the voices of our learners:

"Parents were encouraged to think about what their children were going though and see thing from their perspectives. Children also recognised that their parents' role was to look after them and show love and understanding."

One teenager said "cut your child some slack because yelling at them and getting angry a lot is not going to make anything better. It's just like in a sense you have got to grieve for leaving and all the hard things we've been through but you have got to get through it."

Wise words.

"Just to keep your children safe and to comfort them if they are feeling sad and to understand how they are feeling, because some people I know were really down because of the earthquake and were really shaken up. But just to understand how they are feeling and the children's perspectives of the earthquake is what I would tell them." And I think we can learn from Diana that we have to listen to the perspectives of children and value their stories and listen to them and hear them.

We can 'Build Back Better'. This was Christchurch. The top picture was when it was devastated by the earthquakes - and this is Christchurch today, a different city but actually necessarily now a new and vibrant city. It's different but maybe it is better than it was.

In the 18th century Samuel Johnson intuitively observed that "The chains of habit are too weak to be felt until they are too strong to be broken" - and perhaps Covid-19 allows those chains perhaps to be weakened and allows us to Build Back Better.