

Transitioning back to School-based Learning

Andrew Fuller

Trial->Turbulence->Transition->

Transformation is the cycle of change we have all been going through.

Trial

We have all been through an incredible alteration of lifestyles. This has brought with it increased stress and times of exhaustion. While these feelings may lessen in the coming months, they will still occur, though hopefully less frequently.

Turbulence

I have outlined in recent papers the cycle of feelings that most people go through during these times:

- Fear and Bewilderment
- Anger
- Are we there yet?

These phases of reaction may repeat several times before we are through these times.

Transition

As if we haven't had enough jolts and changes already, now we all need to adapt back into in-school learning. Let's talk about how to make that transition as smooth and as successful as possible. (I look forward to writing about the opportunities for transformation soon).

Priority Number 1: The Sleep Cycle

Sleep changes are a common effect of the recent times. Dreams change, schedules shift. It is time to re-establish a more usual sleep cycle.

If you have ever experienced jet lag after travelling across time zones, you may know that it will take at least one day for each hour of time difference. For example, Melbourne is 9 hours ahead of London so as a general rule of thumb you can expect 9 days before you feel fully in the local time zone. Depending on how out of whack your sleep has been, try to give

yourself the time to re-adjust your sleep cycle before returning to school.

What sets our sleep cycle most powerfully is 'first light, first bite'. Get up at the time you would need to on a typical school day and eat breakfast soon afterwards. If you can, go for a walk outside or at least sit near a window.

Getting your sleep cycle back into sync with the school and work day improves learning and mental health

Priority No. 2- Can't wait to see you.

One of the main things that helps us all to transition back is knowing there is someone there who is wanting to see us. We all look forward to catching up with good people and having some fun. Reaching out and making contact with school friends and specific teachers sets this up.

Priority No. 3- Safe and Certain

We are all in the care of one another. There needs to be a clear understanding that we intend to keep everyone safe and well and have planned as much as we can, for this outcome.

This is means we need to have a plan if someone feels unwell either physically or by feeling scared or apprehensive.

These are the times when community's need to draw together to support everyone. Consider developing a list of FAQ's (frequently asked questions) and making the answers accessible to everyone.

In these times ambiguity is our enemy and will increase anxiety. Clarity is our friend.

Priority No. 4- Restart the year

We are not looking at a resumption of the year. Most of us have had quite enough of 2020 already. What we are looking for is a whole fresh start. During the turbulence, priorities and lives have been re-structured. Social connections have changed.

The orientation we need to do now, is to form new connections and to renew our attitude towards learning and success.

Limbering up for learning will involve rekindling friendships, warming up our curiosity and stretching our imaginations. We will all need a few practice runs before we feel we can safely regain our full stride.

Priority No. 5 Plan for success

Given that the shape of the year has changed more than any of us expected, we need to plan for success. A way to do this is to assess each young person's learning strengths at www.mylearningstrengths.com. The full report can be used to establish a personalised learning plan for the next six months.

For senior students the risk is feeling that the year has got away from them and they feel they cannot succeed. Clearly this is not true. Firstly, they have all experienced the same setbacks. Secondly, there is plenty of time to catch up and succeed. Clear systems and plans will outdo slogging themselves into a frenzy or giving up.

Priority No. 6- Less Really is More

It is understandable that some people will feel in a rush to make up for the time and opportunities missed in the early part of the year. Cramming in as much as possible to make up for lost time is a compelling idea. It is also a certainty that if we do this, it won't work.

Given the upheaval of past months, rushing too much or putting too much in place too early is a recipe for exhaustion, disenchantment and

disengagement. While we are back in business, easy does it. Taking our time now to slowly rebuild a sense of success will pay off. Take it slow and make it fun! We have all had more misery than we need this year.

Priority No. 7- Review

About five weeks after the resumption of school-based learning, we need to schedule time to review the process of re-integration. This needs to be an individual check-in of the pluses and the minuses of the experiences, what people feel has worked well (as well as what hasn't) and a re-assessment of what we think is going to help in the future.

The results of this review will enable us to shift to the next phase of the year: transformation.

Over 11,000 students have benefitted from knowing their learning strengths in the past year- www.mylearningstrengths.com

Andrew is the author of **START** (School Transition and Resilience Training)- <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/documents/school/teachers/health/start.pdf>

Andrew's books include:
Your Best Life At Any Age
and
Unlocking Your Child's Genius