

Safety, Agency, Connection:

Priorities to Help Students Transition Back to School



Blockchain technology
employed by CBSE for
board exam results

Re-schooling schools

Developing life skills
in children

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Managing Modern Parents

■ **RASHMI MARIAN FURTADO**
Senior Editor, TeacherTirbe.world



It is important for a child to have a conducive environment to be able to study well and achieve their academic goals. The best way to do it is for all teachers and parents to work together, but often that's not the case. Sometimes teachers may have overbearing parents in their class that they find it difficult to manage. At times we teachers may also make it difficult for the parents to communicate with us. In this piece, I will shed light on certain simple methods that will help us smoothen our relationships with parents.

Frequent Principal/Teacher talks – It's common now for class teachers to communicate to parents through WhatsApp and also have WhatsApp groups for all the parents. On a fortnightly or monthly basis, class teachers can use the voice recording feature to record what has been happening in the class, mentioning accolades and progress and send it on the WhatsApp group.

Truly prepare yourself – We teachers repeatedly tell our students to prepare themselves well for their exams or any situation that's perceived as challenging. But when it comes to our interactions with one of the important stakeholders of our profession, we are not always well prepared. Modern parents want to feel involved, and with every piece of information being available at the tip of our fingers, they are usually very well-prepared during parent-teacher interactions. As teacher, it's important for us to be ready for any googlies that are thrown at us.

Use technology to provide personal feedback – Technology today is being used for almost everything from yoga classes, art classes, to doctor's consultation. Schools can use video conferencing platforms to have sessions with parents and students to give personal feedback. This will also help the school minimise the number of parents visiting the school physically.

Always have two teachers to address a parent - There can sometimes be delicate situations while interacting with parents. Sometimes these situations can become very difficult for a teacher to manage, especially if the teacher is being accused of saying things they have not. Having two teachers in every parent interaction (even if one of them is just observing) helps maintain a lot of calm.

Involve, don't just indulge – It's important for teachers to involve the parents to the right degree. Keeping the parents updated, asking them for ideas on certain occasions, even calling them and asking them to help you solve an issue that you are facing with their child, will help. A simple statement like the following can sometimes go a long way - "Ma'am, this is the issue we are facing with your child, and you know her better than anyone else. Could you help me help her?"

Different channels of communication – It's always important to have multiple channels of communication with the parents. It's advisable to have multiple strategies to handle certain situations, managing parents being one of them. Some parents maybe comfortable with a phone call, some with WhatsApp, mail, meetings/digital meetings and so on. As teachers, if we can maintain multiple channels of communication, it'll help create a comfort zone for the parents, making it easier for us as teachers to have a meaningful engagement with them.

We can divide the parents into two broad categories - Micro-Manager parents and Absent parents. Understanding how to manage these types of parents is essential, as everything that parents do, is without a doubt, for the good of the child. But when not done in moderation it can be a botheration.




Micro-Manager parents – Sometimes parents, albeit well-meaning get involved to an extent that it can overbearing for the child and the teacher. They may question every grade or disciplinary action that the teacher has taken. They may want to know about the grades of other students in the class and about the extra effort they take to get those grades. They may use every channel of communication like a mail, text, phone call and meetings for some of the smallest issues that may actually be non-issues. To manage such parents, it is important that a teacher first keeps their immediate superior informed. Once this is done, the teacher needs

to firmly but politely inform the parent that frequent unscheduled interactions are not possible. Teachers must also understand that they are not bound to share the details of other students with the parents and the same can be communicated to the parents. Also, teachers can have an honest, open and a respectable conversation with such parents that their time has to be divided among the entire class and that it's not always possible to give special attention to their child.

Absent parents – Sometimes parents may not be involved or in touch with the school at all. This may be for various reasons like work commitments, single parent households, illnesses, or simply a lack of interest (which let us assume is rarely the case). Teachers will have to be very sensitive in managing such situations. Often, we may call out the child of an absent parent in front of other creating an embarrassing situation for the child. These possible mistakes from us teachers must be avoided at all costs, as it may not be the child's fault. The best way forward is to have a private conversation with the child to understand the actual cause for absence (or repeated absence). If a parent can't manage time, an alternative channel of communication like a phone call or a digital meeting may help the teacher establish contact.

Whether micro-managers or absentees, we teachers need to understand that parents always have their child's best interest at the heart of every action they take. All we teachers need to do is make the parents realise that what they want for their individual children, is something we teachers want for every single child that we teach and mentor. Let us all try to achieve this understanding, as it will help us have a smooth communication and a better relationship with parents.



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Re-schooling schools

■ G. BALASUBRAMANIAN

G. Balasubramanian is a doyen of school education in India. He has held several positions of leadership at CBSE, including Director Academics. He was the brain behind the introduction of several innovations at CBSE, which included frontline curriculum, communicative approach to language teaching, Information Technology, alternatives to homework, etc. He is also an author, poet and a sought-after speaker at educational conferences world over. This article has been taken from G. Balasubramanian's official website balaspeaks.in




If one could recall the words of Alvin Toffler who said “The illiterate of the 21st century will not be those who cannot read and write but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn”, the same concept could be applied to the emerging scenario of the schools of the future (especially in the post-COVID-19 scenario) and one could say “the schools to un-school and reschool”. Though such an expression appears a little articulated, one cannot refuse to position it in the emerging scenario.

IMPACT PREVIEW

- »» Current situation in schools due to covid-19
- »» The future of schools

What is the current scenario?

01. The covid-19 has dislodged several of the practices of yester years in school operations, content delivery, pedagogical methods and inter-personal relationships.
02. The Covid-19 has impacted the mindset of all stakeholders with regard to the feasibility of some of the existing practices and raised doubts and questions.


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- A horizontal bar composed of eight colored segments: pink, yellow, purple, blue, orange, red, light blue, and green.
03. The impact on financial security for the ongoing years has raised doubts about growth, development and sustenance.
 04. The cost involved in the enhanced versions of curricular and pedagogical deliveries demands a lot of advocacies among parents and other stakeholders.
 05. Management of human resources and academic resources has created newer challenges and has called for review of trust systems, better accountabilities and transparent procedures.
 06. The intermediary shift to technological deliveries of curriculum and pedagogy enabling 'Blended Learning' approaches has been received with mixed responses, with its latent strengths and limitations.
 07. Parental responses to changed paradigms leaving learners to self-learning models has met with some predictable reactions as they still believe in traditional packages promoting rote-learning with a package of achievable high scores.
 08. Learners have not yet been able to understand the idea of 'freedom to learn' with measurable discipline in learning practices alongside responsibilities and accountabilities.
 09. While there is an increased focus on 'competency-based learning' and 'skill-based learning' they continue to remain mirages, with parents unable to get over their addiction to engaging competitions from the formative years to their wards.
 10. The fear of the future capsuled in a sense of insecurity forces the social mindset to move ahead with caution and assurance.

What is the likely future scenario?

01. Schools may not be able to continue the same models for the future and have to plant seeds of change.
02. The idea of change in concepts, practices and procedures have to be largely localised, geographically and culturally contextual.

03. The process of change needs to encompass the entire universe of school thought structure.
04. A series of advocacy methods needs to be put in place to prepare all the stakeholders to understand, appreciate and part of the culture of change.
05. Technology integration has to be holistic, ongoing and purposeful. Initial investments in technology should not be viewed with suspicion or hesitation.
06. The continuous exposure to the pace of change in technology has to be an on-going process for school faculty, with artificial intelligence, augmented reality with decreasing interface between human intelligence and machine intelligence.
07. The focus is largely likely to be on learning, with a declining focus on the existing models of assessment. The interventional models of school assessment on continuous and ongoing patterns would replace existing terminal modes of assessment.
08. There is likely to be a higher cost on quality of human investments in school systems both on a regular basis as well as contractual basis.
09. Schools might be required to address multipolar inputs for providing content with support to differenced learning strategies closer to consumer needs.
10. The schools would be required to demonstrate higher accountability in their delivery models which will have to include holistic learning needs taking cognizance of mental and emotional health of the learners.
11. School logistics and legal procedures have to be strengthened on a more pragmatic manner which is feasible, communicative and legally valid.

Periodic quality assessment of the teachers would keep them on their toes to ensure their sustenance in jobs and relevance to the profession.

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12. Technological and vigilance infrastructures for better security systems both on the physical infrastructure and intellectual infrastructure have to be put in place.
 13. Schools would need more accessible medical support systems alongside sound counselling systems which are socially acceptable.
 14. The rules and regulations of the governing agencies are likely to undergo sea-change with more compelling indicators for compliance.
 15. The financial infantries of schools are likely to come under closer scrutiny forcing better discipline restricting laissez-faire approaches to finance management.
 16. Emerging researches on brain sciences, neuro-cognitive modelling exercises and automated communication practices would call for changed mindset in the teaching community.
 17. Periodic quality assessment of the teachers would keep them on their toes to ensure their sustenance in jobs and relevance to the profession.
 18. “Freedom to learn” and “freedom of learning” is likely to being in more legal interventions in favour of the learners both on empathetic considerations as well as for individual growth triggered by quality achievements.

All the above indicators and a few more, do indicate that the concept of schools will undergo a metamorphosis in the coming years, with informal and formal learning systems seeking meeting points, harmony, synergy and performance analysis.

Education systems need to be ready to respond to these emerging challenges with adequate pre-planning rather than to wait and react on a later date. With all these challenges, one must remember the saying of Victor Hugo "He who opens a school door, closes a prison". ■

Safety, Agency, Connection:

Priorities to Help Students Transition Back to School

Author - Nimah Gobir

Credit - This article was first published on the website, [kqed.org/mindshift](https://www.kqed.org/mindshift)

School districts are committed to having students back in school buildings even as the delta variant of the corona virus threatens to derail in-person learning. However, cutting through all of the concerns about academics is the realisation that students will need support that goes beyond schoolwork.

“There’s been this slow IV drip of stress,” said Joyce Dorado, UCSF clinical professor and director of Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools, during a Education Writers Association Conference. “There will be triggers in the environment that make people suddenly feel terrified or unsafe.”

She said that if kids are having a hard time as school gets started, they are probably expressing a need for one of three things: safety, agency or connection. Educators and caregivers can prioritise these three areas to support kids through this transition, which will be challenging for many.

Dorado recommends that teachers allow for as much room for student agency as possible and empower them by making sure they have voice and choice around the things that are affecting them. Having control goes a long way in easing students back into the physical classroom after months learning within the constraints of online school.



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Rebuild Learning Skills with Student Agency

Every year students come back from summer break or vacation at all different levels, said Torrie Vicklund, a teacher at a K-8 school in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Teaching students who are returning from remote learning will most likely be similar, though teachers will need to attend to fears about the delta variant and any traumas children might be experiencing. To prepare for the start of the school year, Vicklund is concentrating on building learning skills. "It's not so much that they didn't learn about algebra this year. It's more so that they didn't have a chance to grow and learn together," she said.

If you are already anxious about school and you don't quite feel safe here, you can't learn and you can't take other chances on top of that.

There's been a lot of attention on learning loss, but framing student learning that way is a deficit perspective and only focuses on the ways students are off track. If students see adults in their lives recognising the ways that they have grown, it communicates to kids that they are resilient. "They will need support in the next year in certain aspects," said Vicklund. "But they'll still come through with a lot more pluses as well in resiliency and adaptability."

Vicklund is expecting the ways students learn with one another to be different, too. For example, if students are coming back from remote learning, they may feel more anxiety about speaking in front of the classroom or going up to the board to work out a math problem in front of peers. "I've already seen it," said Vicklund. "If you are already anxious about school and you don't quite feel safe here, you can't learn and you can't take other chances on top of that."

Vicklund hopes to help students acclimate by being mindful of when they do classroom activities that require performance and high levels of interaction with the whole class. She's opting to save these exercises for later in the school year.

When students start learning in school buildings full time, caregivers will

also have a role to play in making sure students feel a sense of agency, according to Dorado. For example, if a child is having trouble getting started on homework after school, caregivers can give them options. She recommends saying something like, "You could do your homework now or you could take a 15 minute break, get something to eat, get some water, take a walk and do it then. Which would you prefer?" Dorado said these moments of giving over control can be very healing.

Educators can also help students form better connections with their peers, which will be critical to students' wellbeing and ability to learn.

Create Opportunities for Connection Among Peers

Educators can also help students form better connections with their peers, which will be critical to students' wellbeing and ability to learn. "Without the relationships, the academics definitely suffer," said Tammy Stephens, a teacher at Bear Lake High School in Idaho. She noticed that students who experience a strong sense of connection feel less stressed and are more willing to try learning new things. Even students who were in school buildings last year may have struggled to connect with classmates when they were behind masks and six feet apart.

Younger students may have never been in the school building due to the pandemic, notes Tika Epstein, assistant principal at J.T. McWilliams Elementary School in Nevada. To help students acclimate to face-to-face learning, her school district provided an optional six-week summer acceleration program for elementary school-aged children with opportunities for social-emotional support, physical education, fine arts, project-based learning and academics throughout the day. They wanted to scaffold the learning experience before the school year started with extra individualised and small group support.

For older students, the isolation of remote learning has been especially hard because they need to socialise with people their age to receive affirmation about the hard things that they're going through as they grow up. "I am lucky to not only teach grade seven, but have a grade seven student at home too," said Vicklund. "She is an only child and going through all of

this on her own. And so I am constantly having to reassure her that she is not the only one going through social anxiety, body changes and other issues in her life.”

She plans on spending a lot more time doing cooperative activities and giving students more informal time to interact with each other to make up for the lack of connection many of her students had been feeling.

Families and emotional safety

Caregivers and educators may feel an urge to gloss over the pandemic and try to move on from the experience. According to Dorado, talking about the good and bad parts of the pandemic with children can help with healing. “If we simply pretend like it never happened,” she said, “then we lose the ability to learn from it.”

To help students feel a sense of emotional safety, Dorado encourages teachers to invite students to discuss the ways their families coped with the pandemic and integrate these practices into the classroom. Dorado invites educators to validate the time students spent at home because families will be essential in helping students adjust to the next school year.

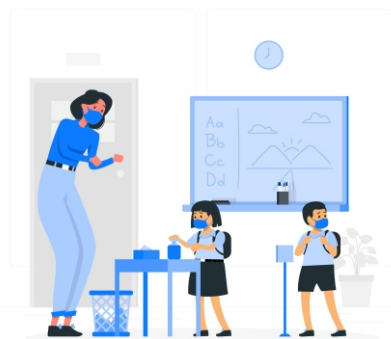


image credits: www.freepik.com

Focusing on learning loss has devalued time spent with caregivers, according to Adam Jordan, professor of special education at the College of Charleston. Even for students who experienced challenges during remote learning, such as low engagement and participation in online classes, learning never stopped.

“I learned a lot from my dad, who was a welder on the weekend. I would learn how to stick metal together,” he said. “And it sparked curiosity in me. And now my son sits with me and we work on motorcycles. And it's something that I didn't learn at school.” ■

Developing life skills in children

■ **Stuti Roy**, Head of Department, English (Primary Wing)
Billabong High Intl School, Noida, Uttar Pradesh.

Stuti Roy works as the Head of Department, English (Primary Wing) at Billabong High International School, Noida. She has completed her Masters in Psychology from University of Madras and Bachelors in Education from Delhi University.



Stuti is an avid writer and her articles have been published in different books and journals. She approaches language as a wonderful medium of expression and focuses on a teaching learning transaction integrated with Blooms, MI Theory and Brain Research Theory.

Recently, she was awarded the Lighthouse Learning Educator's Impact Award 2021 for the Best Teacher in the Pre-Primary and Primary category.

Ms Mary Thomas entered the classroom and saw Sia and Ria, her students labelling and abusing each other. She intervened and came to know that they had got into a disagreement and loathed each other.

Ms Thomas gave each of them a bag of berries and told them to always keep it with themselves. This continued for over one week. Both the girls were exasperated carrying that bag as the berries had begun to rot. They approached their teacher and told her that they were then exhausted carrying that rotten bag.

This kind of situation is more than usual in a peer group. So how would a teacher handle?

She very politely told both the girls, "You both can't bear to carry these rotten, stinking, bag of berries. So how are you able to carry on that disgust and hatred for each other? The girls understood, became friends and over a period of time, developed love and respect for each other.

Every day of our lives is a new lesson. If you learn the lesson well and apply it; whether positive or negative, you determine what happens in your tomorrow.

Values or life skills are like seeds that sprout, become saplings, soar high to touch the sky spreading their wings.

One cannot acquire the basic values in a day or two. They need to be built. Building values and life skills is somewhat similar to building a house, brick by brick. The four most important building blocks for life skills are the individual itself, family, community and the society.

Life skills can't be taught in isolation as a subject, rather woven into different aspects of the curricula. Current 21st-century generation indicates that our future citizens need to be multi-literate, creative and innovative. Learning is a complex system of interactive processes. There is no recipe for it. But yes!! We expect a good product.

It is very vital for the children to be prepared for the ever-emerging changes and trends. To be able to adapt to new situations, working collaboratively, thinking out of the box, using failures as learning milestones are important skills the learners should have to succeed in future.

Most individuals do not think of the need for being aware of 'SELF'. And most often, we do not pay attention on understanding our own strengths and weakness and the opportunities available and ahead of us.

School curriculum should incorporate strategies that require higher-level thinking skills such as inference, prediction, analysis and critical thinking. With the use of critical thinking strategies, students develop skills such as reasoning, questioning and investigating, observing and describing, comparing and connecting, finding complexity, and exploring viewpoints. Problem solving is an important element of all content areas.

School curriculum should incorporate strategies that require higher-level thinking skills such as inference, prediction, analysis and critical thinking.

The key areas of life skills can be identified as -

- decision-making and problem-solving
- creative thinking
- critical thinking
- communication and interpersonal skills
- self-awareness and empathy
- assertiveness
- resilience and coping with stress

To help children with life skills, schools should emphasize on 'Growth Mindsets'. When this is integrated into daily practice, a child starts to enjoy learning. They understand that progress takes time and they keep trying until they succeed. This helps them achieve success and gain confidence as they grow. The students don't hesitate to ask for help, they are ready to put efforts and love taking new challenges. The children are no more afraid of failures and view mistakes as opportunities and stepping stones.

Inculcation of simple responsibilities of simple chores like laying or clearing the table, preparing their bags and uniforms before school can help children imbibe life skills like empathy, self-awareness, problem solving, decision making and effective communication.

Life skills can be integrated with both curricular and co-curricular activities.

Social Sciences promote positive values like safety and welfare, civic sense, sense of belongingness to the nation and the society and decision making through topics like secularism and democracy.

Imparting of life skills through languages fosters love, tolerance and spirit of enquiry.

The woods are lovely dark and deep,
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

The above lines by Robert Frost stand as an epitome of motivation to work incessantly without ceasing to distractions.

Science is a subject equated with facts, experiments and intense knowledge. Developing scientific temperament is the main aim here which eventually springs up sensitivity, stability and consistency.

Mathematics points out attention, precision, accuracy and harmony. Without accuracy, a triangle would not look like a triangle. Teachers can often relate their topics to real life situations to teach value and respect for money.

Performing Arts develop creative and critical thinking skills. It is said that even a painting can speak a hundred words. It reflects on the spiritual, emotional and intellectual aspects.

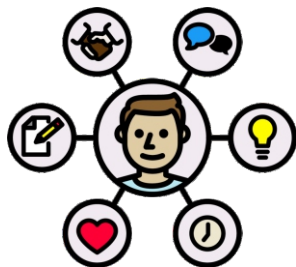
Self-awareness and interpersonal communication allow students to best use their skills in group work. Group projects at school are a good way to learn teamwork, decision-making and empathy.

Drama, dance, music and art not only allow students to channelize but also experience and identify emotions. These days yoga, sports and meditation are increasingly becoming a part of the school curriculum. This aids in managing stress and increase concentration.

Sports and games also help in imbibing critical thinking, self-awareness and effective communication. Thus schools today have all the tools to aid holistic learning.

During transaction of life skills education, students should be actively involved in a dynamic teaching-learning process. The emphasis should be on 'experiential learning' because life skills cannot be learnt in abstract and theoretical way.

There can be no conclusion to this vast area but yes...The take away could be 'Take Responsibility of self, others and your own actions'. ■



Education news

Blockchain technology employed by CBSE for board exam results

CBSE, in technical collaboration with Centre of Excellence for Block Chain Technology of National Informatics Centre, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), has come up with a solution using BlockChain Technology named 'Academic (BlockChain) Documents'. BlockChain Technology ensures that academic documents are recorded in a secure and tamper-proof way. These academic documents can be accessed online in a trusted and verifiable manner.

Earlier, Artificial intelligence (AI) and Machine learning (ML) for affiliation systems were introduced. Here, the data is linked and stored with cryptographic security so that it is immutable and traceable.

With the ownership of all the participating stakeholders, blockchain technology records the data in a distributed ledger. This recorded data in the chain, is based on the consensus of all the stakeholders and simultaneously replicated at all the locations in the distributed network of blockchain nodes. This will help eliminate the dependency on third party verification. The data, starting from the year 2019, has been recorded in this and the data of the previous years will soon follow. This network is established with nodes at Bangalore, Pune and Jaipur.



The Academic BlockChain Document can be used by various educational institutes for verification at the time of admission for higher studies and companies for job offers. It can also be used for online counselling by the institutes, by integrating their systems with plug-in interfaces. The banks and financial institutions can also use this system for sanctioning of educational loans and merit-based scholarship, based on the qualifications of the applicants. One can verify the authenticity of

the certificates even after several years of issuance. It will provide the trail of all the insertions or changes made on a particular certificate. It results in transparent, tamper proof and paperless usage of certificate. It also substantially cuts down the time for verification and reduces paperwork.

Source - CBSE

K. Kasturirangan to head a panel to develop new curriculum for schools

The Union Education Ministry has formed a 12-member committee to develop four national curriculum frameworks (NCFs) for school, early childhood, adult education and teachers. This panel will be headed by former ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) chief, K. Kasturirangan. He is also the drafting committee chairperson of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP-2020).

The members of the panel include prominent names of Chancellors and Chairmen of noted Universities and Foundations across India. Noted American mathematician of Indian origin, Manjul Bhargava is also on the panel.



This NCF will be the fifth one, which will come after a gap of 16 years. The frameworks will be in accordance with the reforms outlined in the NEP. The NCFs will serve as a guideline for textbooks, syllabus and teaching practices for schools in India. The committee will also discuss the position papers finalised by the national focus groups on different aspects in the four areas, drawing inputs from the state curriculum frameworks.

The development of the new curriculums will not be a top to down exercise, and district-level consultations will be held after states and union territories come up with their own curriculum. The NCFs will be finalised by the committee after incorporating suggestions received from these stakeholders and also in the meetings of the executive committee and general body (GB) of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) and the Central Advisory Board on Education.

Source – Indian Express

Delta and Delta plus variant of COVID-19

What you need to know

■ **DR. VIVEK BALIGA**
Cardiologist and Consultant Physician

Dr. Vivek Baliga B. is a consultant physician and cardiologist, and director of Baliga Diagnostics in Bangalore. He is a keen advocate of patient education and loves to blog about all things health related. Learn more about him at drvivekbaliga.com.



We are all bracing ourselves for the third COVID-19 wave. Little do we know what it is going to bring. The second wave was devastating. Many of us lost loved ones. It's been a terrible time. The WHO has so far reported 11 variants of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Now there is news of the delta plus variant. We heard about it a short while ago, but there are concerns that it might hit us hard this time round.

I thought I would briefly discuss the Delta plus variant of the COVID-19 virus today. I will admit right here that by the time I have finished reading all the research, I was just as clueless as I was when I started writing this article. There is just too much conflicting information.

Delta variant of COVID-19 virus

The delta COVID-19 variant was first found in India. It was first identified in October 2020 and was primarily responsible for the second wave in the months of April and May. It was labelled B.1.617.2 by scientists, and since its uprising has surpassed the alpha variant. It is believed that the Delta variant may be 60% more powerful and virulent than the alpha variant (B.1.1.7).



Delta plus

Not surprisingly the delta variant has further mutated, with scientists calling the new virus 'Delta Plus'. They are calling it B.1.617.2.1, or AY.1.

The mutation is called K417N and is seen on the spike protein – the protein that is responsible for the virus to enter healthy human cells. A similar mutation was seen on the beta variant as well. So far, there have not been many cases of this virus affecting Indians.

The primary problem with the delta plus variant is that it is resistant to treatment with monoclonal antibodies. Monoclonal antibodies are a form of treatment now administered in the early stages of COVID-19 infection, and have been shown to shorten the duration of the illness and hasten recovery.

Resistance could imply a longer course of illness. There have been other concerns raised about the delta plus variant. Firstly, it may transmit from one person to another with total ease. This means more

people will get affected a lot faster. Secondly, it binds to the lung cells in a stronger manner to other variants. Finally, once the infection is over, the antibody response generated by the body may be next to nothing.

If you have been vaccinated, there is even a lower chance that you would suffer a serious illness from the delta plus variant.

Will infection with Delta plus be more serious?

Fortunately, so far there have been no indicators that this ‘plus’ variant is going to cause a more serious or life-threatening illness. If you have been vaccinated, there is even a lower chance that you would suffer a serious illness from the delta plus variant.

Do the vaccines work?

The effectiveness of vaccines against the COVID-19 virus has always been a concern amongst the public. I often get asked whether taking both vaccines can really protect the individual against the virus. From the available evidence, a single dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine seems to lower the risk of developing symptoms from the delta variant by around 33%. This is lower than the alpha variant, which is around 50%.

A study published in the journal ‘Nature’ found that a single dose of the

Pfizer and Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine generated a 'barely discernible' antibody response.

This means that just one vaccine will not offer the protection the body needs against the virus. The paper goes on to state that when both injections are given, the protection increases to 95%. Interestingly, they also report that those people who have developed natural antibodies through infection do not produce antibodies that can effectively fight the delta variant.

The COVISHIELD vaccine offers 70% protection after the first dose, increasing to 91% after the second dose given 8 to 12 weeks apart, according to news reports.

However, having gone through some of the research, the numbers are very variable. Some papers state that the protection offered even after 2 doses of the vaccine is only about 60-80%.

The ICMR has stated that COVAXIN vaccine is effective against the Delta plus variant. Those who have been affected by COVID and have then gone on to have one or two vaccine shots seem to have a higher protection against the delta variant versus those who just had the vaccine, research has shown.

Taking Care

Despite vaccination and its benefits, I strongly urge people to observe the same precautions that have been reiterated time and again. Social distancing should remain a priority, and always, always wear your mask when venturing out into a public place.

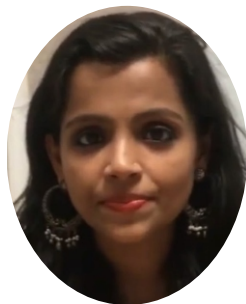
COVID is here for a lot longer than we anticipated. Taking the right precautions is of utmost importance.

The decline in cases will be slow, and I am sure our patience will pay off and life will eventually return to total normalcy. ■

COVID is here for a lot longer than we anticipated. Taking the right precautions is of utmost importance.

Important salary jargons you should know

Aarti Tibrewala Darooka, a chartered accountant and MBA, is an entrepreneur and financial literacy advocate. She has over 15 years of combined experience in consulting, advisory and travel industries. A national ranker in CA, Aarti is a published author, who has written a plethora of books for children's financial education and is currently helping build awareness for financial literacy for women through her platform, *Sthreedhan*.



“A good teacher is a master of simplification and an enemy of simplism”.
– Louis A. Berman (Author)

As a teacher, you have spent your life simplifying the most complex of concepts for the minds of the young. Your energies are diverted towards updating your knowledge in your chosen field to ensure that your wards are not left behind in this discipline. This is your purpose and your pride. Perhaps this leaves you with little time and energy to understand the complexities of the more mundane aspects of life – such as money.

There are many a term that one hears while talking about salaries and money that make it seem too complex and not worth your time. Let's try and understand some of the most commonly misunderstood salary jargon.

For anyone drawing a salary, there is a lot of confusion between three terms – CTC, Gross Salary and Net Salary. What's the difference between them? Well, here it is.



CTC means **Cost-To-Company**, or your employer school in this case. It refers to the total value of not just the salary that the school is paying you but also other direct benefits, indirect benefits, contributions to Provident Fund/Gratuity/other retirement funds, food coupons, daily transport facility, etc that the school may be providing to you. Basically it is a term that captures what it costs for the school to employ you. This figure will always be much higher than the salary that you actually receive in your bank account.

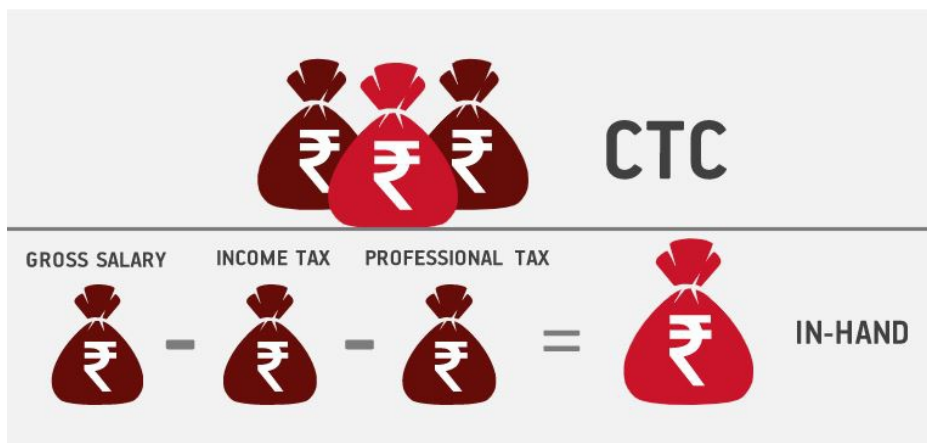


image credit: adityabirlacapital.com

Next is **Gross Salary**, This is the sum of items like your basic pay, dearness allowance, house rent allowance and other benefits that are paid out as cash to you, but is calculated before removing any deductions whatsoever. So if there no contribution from your end to things like provident fund and no taxes at all, this is the amount you would've received in your account.

Finally, there's **Net Salary**. Net Salary is what you do get in your account after removing your contribution to any funds as made compulsory by the law or by your school's policy and income tax on your salary.

You may ask why is it important to know the difference between these terms? If you are someone who has a higher requirement for cash than savings at the present, although your CTC may look big, you may realise that you are not getting enough cash in the bank to meet your needs.

Or that your employer school adds the value of many things that you are not using but is still being considered as a benefit to you.

For example, the school may have included the school bus transport cost for one person in your CTC but you may not be using the school bus for your daily commute. So you are spending from your pocket on getting to work and not getting reimbursed by the school. You may want to go back to your salary slip and actually check whether you are getting a transport allowance instead of the using the school bus service.

Similarly, your school may be including the cost of certain training programs in your CTC but you may not be attending those. You could check with the school accounts department whether you can claim the equivalent value of the course as reimbursement towards any other courses that are relevant to your subject.

You could be incurring a loss by not going through your salary break-up in detail. So better to educate yourself on the components of your CTC, what is trickling down from that into your gross salary and what is finally coming into your net salary.

After all, ignorance is not always bliss. ■

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We Recommend App

Seesaw Class

Seesaw is a student-driven digital collection, that inspires students to do their best work and saves teachers' time. It is a platform for students for meaningful engagement.

How does Seesaw work?

The app creates a link between the teachers, students and the families. Students can use built-in multimodal tools to capture what they know in Seesaw's digital portfolio. Teachers see all stages of student thinking and progress — enabling them to teach better. Families gain a window into their child's learning and engage in home-to-school connections.



Families gain a window into their child's learning and engage in home-to-school connections.

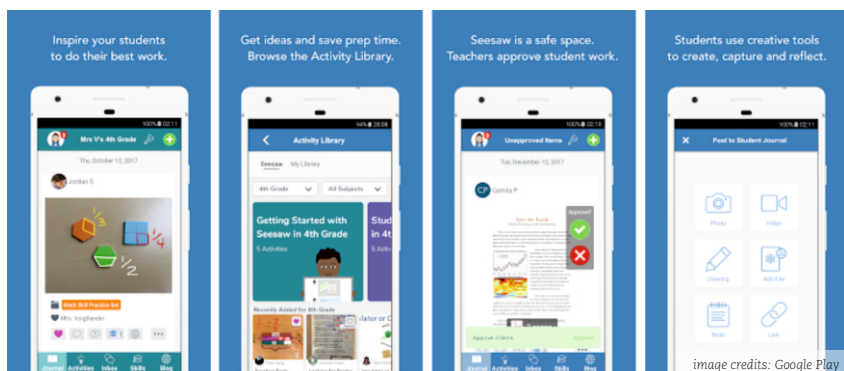
App features

01. The Seesaw app is compatible with hundreds of other apps, including Apple and Google apps.
02. It translates notes, comments and captions into more than fifty languages.
03. It can be downloaded on any device, shared or one-to-one.

How does it help students?

01. Students can explore a variety of powerful and insightful tools like draw, record, collage, video, and more, to show what they know in the way that works best for them.
02. Students can choose from thousands of activities, search by class, subject and keywords to look for activities made by educators.

03. The creative tools on Seesaw encourage student engagement. They can express themselves, reflect on their learning and create a portfolio they are proud to show others.



How does it help teachers?

01. Teachers, by using the app, can get ideas, saving preparation time.
02. They can browse through thousands of great activities which are ready to use in the classrooms.
03. Responses of students can be collected digitally, reducing the load of paperwork.
04. The app focuses on students' understanding of concepts. It helps teachers see and hear what each student knows so they can better understand their progress
05. It gives differentiated support through comments and feedback.

The app has also received a few awards, which include -

- 2018 Top Pick for Learning by Common Sense Education.
- Best Website of 2016 by American Association of School Librarians.
- Richard Byrne's Free Tech for Teachers. ■

Back to school!

Is it going to be easy?

■ **VARSHA PRASAD**
Editor, TeacherTribe.world



After almost 2 years of working and learning out of home, schools across states are slowly opening. While some states have already opened doors for classes 9 and above, they are still contemplating on letting the little ones in. Opening of schools for all the students is going to be a different experience for all the stakeholders, unlike reopening after vacations. There are many new factors that need to be considered now, with the health and safety aspect being the foremost.

This apart, it is going to be a herculean task for schools and teachers to induct children to schools with new norms. It is not going to be easy for teachers either, to be handling a class full of students who are now used to the comfort of their screens at home. After sitting at home for close to two years, it will take a lot of time for children to readjust to the routine of attending school for 7-8 hours a day, 5-6 days of the week.

Students who are now used to the luxury of 'learn from home', where there are snacks to munch on in between classes, parent(s) to attend to their needs every few minutes and afternoon naps, it is going to be very difficult to get the 'discipline' back. Though the initial days are going to be fun, where the children will be excited to get back to school and meet their friends, there will be a lot of effort that the schools and teachers will have to put in to get the routine back on track.

A few steps can be taken, and a few innovative ideas can be followed by schools and teachers to slowly reacclimatize them to adjusting to school.

What can schools do?

Without doubt, the schools' major tasks will be to sanitise the premises, rearrange the classrooms such that there is some distance maintained between the benches and maintain this when the children are back. Here are a few things I think schools can follow to induct students –

a. Schools on alternative days –

To manage the number of people (students and teachers) in school, the school can have classes for students on alternate days, where half of the class's strength will attend physically while the remaining will join the class online. This can be switched the next day where the half who attended online will come to school and the other half which attended classes will learn from home. This will slowly help children get adjusted. This can be gradually increased to 2 days school and a break day.

Schools in Japan have afternoon nap breaks after lunch, where students put their heads down on the desks and nap for ten minutes. This is believed to improve the concentration levels of the children.

b. Duration of class –

Though the schools will be open for the regular 7-8 hours a day, the classes can be reduced to 15-30 mins per session, for the first few weeks. This can slowly be increased to 30-40 minutes. The steady increase in the timings will help children settle in without a sudden change.

c. Photographs and video updates –

Schools can take photographs and make short video clips of the classes, the activities students are engaging in once back in school and of the safety measures taken by the school. These can be circulated on the school WhatsApp groups, where parents and guardians are updated on a regular basis. This can be reassuring for the anxious parents at home.

What can teachers do?

Teachers are going to face a multifold of challenges – from both parents and children. Handling children in class is going to be a hectic task. Some can be over excited to return to class while some can be unhappy and dull.

Dealing with all of them at the same time is going to be difficult. The parents are going to be anxious too. The regular parent-teacher meets (online or offline) will help address the parents' concerns. But a few things can be followed by the teachers in class to help the students –

- a. **Activity-based sessions** – It will be very helpful for teachers to bring back the 'tried and tested' activity-based sessions to the classrooms. Teachers can have classes with alternate session being reserved for activities. While the students learn theory in one class, the next class can be dedicated to activities related to the subject concerned. This will break the monotony and help children enjoy their lessons. The activities can include brainstorming sessions and group discussions.
- b. **Brainstorming sessions** – While teaching online, most of the teachers would ask the students to come prepared on a particular topic which would be discussed in class online. This method can be continued in the physical classroom where children come prepared to class and the topic given is discussed as a brainstorming session.

Staying positive and trusting their abilities to transform the classroom for the better is very crucial.
- c. **Group discussions** – In most of the sessions on online classes, children would be told to mute their mics so that the class is not disturbed. Once back in the physical classroom, group discussions can be organised where all the students are given an opportunity to share their thoughts. This will help in exchange of ideas and students working together as a team.
- d. **Nap time!** – Schools in Japan have afternoon nap breaks after lunch, where students put their heads down on the desks and nap for ten minutes. This is believed to improve the concentration levels of the children. Schools in India can follow this too. This can be introduced for primary and pre-primary classes.

I think following at least few of these methods can help students transition

smoothly back to school. Though it is going to be difficult initially, students will progressively get used to and start enjoying their time at school.

Amidst all this, it is also very important for the teachers to take care and help themselves. It is going to be equally new and stressful for them to be handling all the students and at the same time transitioning from online to physical classes. Teachers can speak to their peers, share ideas and support each other during this time. Staying positive and trusting their abilities to transform the classroom for the better is very crucial. As always, a happy teacher has a happy classroom.

Do you have any more such ideas that schools and teachers can inculcate to make the transition better? Write to me at varsha@greycaps.com.

Varsha Prasad

#ProudToBeATeacher



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varsha@greycaps.com

Varsha Prasad is leading TeacherTribe.world initiative from Greycaps Knowledge Tribe, exclusively for teachers, as its Editor. She is also the Editor of TeacherTribe.world magazine. It is created by Greycaps Knowledge Tribe to celebrate the contributions of our teachers. She has played a vital role in creating many products, which ignite the curiosity of children, including the Global Awareness Program, also known as GAP in schools.