

The Last Word

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More than a decade ago, Clayton Christensen's book *Disrupting Class* proposed that by 2019 half of all high school courses would take place in some type of online environment.

It was a bold prediction given that the technology available to schools, districts and students is not as robust, dynamic and accessible as it is today. At the time that *Disrupting Class* was published, we were still very much a flip phone society.



It was not Christensen's prediction for the future of schooling that has stuck with me all these years, but his rationale for why this was possible. As a leading expert on innovation and growth, he had provided in the book a very credible comparison between the education system and the business world in terms of adaptability and agility.

Compared to education, the purpose of business is quite clear and relatively simple. The purpose of business is to maximize profitability. The goalposts for businesses remain very stable, and in a fixed position. However, the goalposts for education are based on the shifting needs of our society and government, meaning that the goalposts sway and move regularly. Education is designed to fulfill a number of varied goals and, at times, competing purposes. Schools are expected to provide custodial care for children, create educated citizens, overcome societal and family inequities, provide social services and maximize the potential of each student. Above all else, schools are expected to create high levels of learning for all.

Applying a business model to the goals of public education oversimplifies the approach because the business world does not have the same range of complex goals to achieve that schools do.

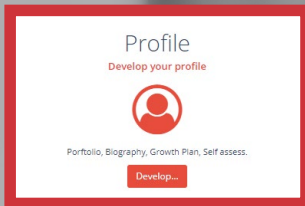
Christensen argues that the school system is significantly more agile and responsive than businesses are because of the varied and complex goals that the system is required to achieve. And while we still have a long way to go to achieving Christensen's prediction that half of all high school classes will be online, his argument about the responsiveness and agility of our system overflows with evidence.

On March 17, 2020, the BCPVPA was notified by the Ministry of Education that due to the pandemic and the recommendations of Provincial Health Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry, schools would be closed to the majority of students. The Ministry's guiding pandemic response was to ensure that while schools were

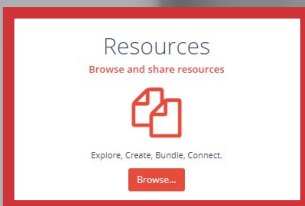
closed to students, that continuity of learning would continue. While Principals and Vice-Principals were expected to be present in schools following Spring Break, the vast majority of teachers were expected to provide instruction from home as we addressed the impact of social/physical distancing on our system. Within two weeks, a seismic shift in how we teach our students was experienced by teachers, school leaders and support staff as we transferred our entire system to new methods of instruction.

It should be noted that public education does to a degree operate a 'monopoly' when it comes to education, free from a great deal of competition. One could argue that holding the market share could actually hinder innovation and responsiveness when there is little or no competition in the marketplace. However, the systems' ability to respond during this pandemic has been remarkable. While we still have room for improvement, teachers immediately embraced new technologies and methods to stay connected to their students. Principals and Vice-Principals provided supports to ensure that positive learning conditions were maintained. Senior teams assisted in creating guiding principles and tools to ensure that the system was clear as to its goals, and that educators had what they needed to address continuity of learning. The response has been remarkable. This system still continues to develop mastery of learning outcomes, and to engage students to develop skills in the same way that in-class instruction would. Above all, educators were reminded that one of the most important drivers in student learning was for students to feel connected to school and their learning.

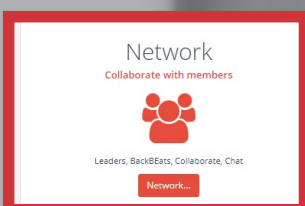
The pandemic has provided for our system a new set of goalposts that the system must address. There are still many questions, problems and challenges that we are working to address as we strive to provide continuity of learning. And while we know that the suspension of in-class instruction is temporary, we go forward with the system-wide understanding that learning for all of our students must continue.



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CREATE

- one-stop access to resources shared by other educators, in your district and province-wide
- share resources directly with students and families: no passwords required
- record Zoom or YouTube instructions, and set meeting times for feedback and check-ins

COLLABORATE

- work with multiple creators in one space
- chat with other educators and explore ideas
- use topics and tags to categorize resources
- create resource bundles
- use easily on all devices, and integrate the platforms you choose

