WEIGHING IT UP: A POST-LOCKDOWN PLANNING TOOL FOR YOUR SCHOOL

It is not yet clear what arrangements will be in place when the ‘lockdown’ begins to resolve, or when that will happen. However, we do know that this will happen, and that we need to plan constructive ways to implement that in school.

This sheet describes a simple approach to involving your whole school community in planning the way forward. It is inspired by ‘Force Field Analysis’, but presented in a way which children and adults will find accessible. It will work best when some or all pupils are back in school.

The ‘lockdown’ has affected school in many ways. Initially, the negative effects were very evident, especially the organisational difficulties and the concerns about vulnerability. (see Guardian diary for reflection on inequalities: <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2020/apr/26/britains-lockdown-diaries-expose-gulf-in-wellbeing-between-rich-and-poor?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Gmail> ) However, there are positives for children too: if those with good social capital do better, then we need to capture what is working well for them and look at how to replicate that for all through our education system. The ‘home schooling’ movement has a long history of positive work on independent learning, ‘learning to learn’ and valuing wider personal development: can we promote this more in the way we run our schools, and make it available to more pupils?

So here is the suggested procedure:

1. Open a dialogue where pupils and staff (separately or together) start to consider what has been good (a gain/improvement) or bad (a loss/concern) about the change to educational arrangements. You might use staff meetings, assemblies, virtual/realtime classroom time.
2. Set up a way for pupils and staff to record their ideas, briefly.
Use two different colours of card – green and amber/red maybe – for the good/bad suggestions. You can have two post boxes, and a nominated person to receive and transcribe any email contributions.
I like to use a balance scale instead – one pan for good, one for bad. This is very visual, and you can see the scale tip when you try to think of good aspects to balance the concerns.

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1. After a while, look at what you have. There may be some concerns which need addressing privately, at an individual level, and you will need to arrange to do that. Others will need to be talked about at a wider level – cluster things which are similar.
2. Decide at what level you are going to do the next bit – could be assembly, classroom…..

Look at the bad cards – some can just be discarded, as they have naturally gone away – celebrate that.
Others need planning to ameliorate effects, or reflecting on when they will naturally cease.

Look at the ‘good’ cards. This is the really creative bit, and should be given much more time. Share the good things. What was good about them? Can any of them continue, and what do we need to do for that to happen? How do we stop gains from ‘washing out’? What do we need to do in school, to be able to capture and continue the best features of what happened? Be creative – have a phase with no ‘Yes, but…’ in it, before you move on to plan actions.

You can involve parents in this process, too – and they are likely to have lots of positive ideas.
3. Plan your next steps. Organise a way to review how you are doing – embedded into your general planning, and strongly involving pupils and staff.

That’s it, really. I hope this is helpful, and would love to hear your story of what you did, later on.