



# The New Normal

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Everyone is being inundated with advice from educational leaders, political figures, health experts, and members of communities all over Indiana, as well as throughout the country, regarding what the next, best steps are for resuming our lives after COVID-19. It is frightening; the fear that has consumed us and continues to occupy our every thought is almost crippling. It would be easy to succumb to paralysis by analysis because, regardless of every well-intended plan and the proposals emerging from the endless rhetoric designed to instill trust and confidence in the plans by the architects of the COVID-19 aftermath, the simple truth is . . . NO ONE KNOWS.

Welcome to the **new normal**. It is fair to say that the lives we live going forward will not be the same as our lives before the crisis, but no one really knows what our lives will be like post-pandemic. The way we work or how we plan social events like eating out, going to a ball game, or gathering with friends will be subject to new sets of rules. Regardless of what life will be like post-pandemic, it is a certainty that it will not ever be as it was pre-pandemic and, like everything else, there will be new sets of rules for traditional public education as well.

Our system of public education has been, and is being, tested. Some school districts have weathered the crisis better than others, but everyone has worked diligently throughout the quarantine to continue educating students. Their efforts are appreciated and should be applauded. K-12 school systems were forced to abandon traditional delivery models for classroom instruction, and although e-learning days were not new to many districts, they were never intended to be a long-term solution for weeks and months of off-site education. Consequently, we are still on the uphill side of what has been and may continue to be a strategy that emphasizes more long-term, remote learning.

A few years ago, ISBA offered a seminar topic titled "Crucial Conversations," after the book by the same title (Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzler, 2012). During these past few weeks, we have published information and spoken to many board members urging that you stay connected, pull together, and work as a team to support your administration during this unsettling time. Certainly, nothing more could be said to convince anyone that what public education is facing, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, is worthy of crucial conversations, immediate and ongoing.

There is precious little time to plan for the 2020 fall semester and whether that will entail opening schools, keeping them closed, or something in-between. Much of the heavy lifting conversations and decisions will be on the shoulders of state government, in concert with the education experts at the state level and in our local school districts. Throughout this time, local boards must remain informed and ready to act with purpose and determination as we wade through these troubled waters. It has not been the first challenge public education has faced, nor will it be the last, but it may test our resolve and try our patience until we break through on the other side of this trial.

## **References**

Patterson, K., Grenny, J., McMillan, R., & Switzler, A. (2012). *Crucial conversations*. New York: McGraw-Hill.