Editorial

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The world-wide Covid-19 pandemic that began late in 2019 lasted throughout 2020 and 2021 and continues into the first half of 2022. The disruptive effects of the pandemic on formal, institutionalized education at all levels from early childhood through university, have been devastating. School closures have been the norm. Attempts to offer systematic, formal education to students at all levels have been intermittent at best and haphazard to nonexistent at worst. The long-term effects of school closures will be considerable, especially to students from economically limited environments, but also to students across the spectrum. School closures have served as a reminder that schools at all levels are, in various ways, as much places for students to spend their days in relative safety and predictability as they are places of academic learning.

The most common substitute for brick-and-mortar school institutions has been the home. Distance learning has made remote teaching and learning possible in ways hardly imagined only a few years ago. But locating students at home has proved to be a major disruption. The infrastructure of schools, which includes not merely academic instruction, but licensed adult supervision, socializing experiences ranging from sports to clubs, student government, , to meal services, day care, health care, counseling, and social services, while not perfect, is more comprehensive than any alternative setting for young people. In smaller towns especially, the school is often the single most significant locus of events.

In any crisis, opportunities present themselves. While almost no one celebrates the tragic outcomes of such a pandemic as this, disruptive events do open the door for new ways of thinking and acting. Distance learning has not merely improved but has proven so effective in certain cases that it is here to stay. The trick will be to find the appropriate balance between face-to-face learning and remote learning. It will be a fortuitous thing is schools are able to capitalize on the strengths of each while recognizing each mode's limiting factors and capabilities. With few exceptions, school learning has taken place indoors, in classrooms. That can and should change. Standardized testing has been suspended in many cases, and whether it will return to its dominant role again remains unknown. Norwegian kindergartens, which engage teachers and students primarily out of doors, are exemplars of the possible. Contagion thrives in indoor, closed settings. Outdoor learning invariably involves movement and active learning, something educational psychologists have told us for years that children need for their growth and development. School should not be the only venue in which students learn. Other agencies, including the home, will probably never replace certain of its key functions, but for reasons of convenience, cost, and suitability, there are other places to learn. As we shall see in certain articles in this edition of IDE Journal, schools at different levels have done remarkable work in different way to restructure teaching and learning.

In 1984, John Goodlad's book, *A Place Called School*, was published. For many good reasons, it became a best seller in education. The operative term in the title, place, conveyed a message loud and clear. It is a thoughtful echo of Robert Frost's epigraph from his poem, "The Death of the Hired Man": "home is that place that when you have to go there, they have to take you in." The idea of school as a place, a central place, of learning, is deeply imbedded in societies around the world. For most of us, it was and is the place we had to go to learn. To be

sure, communities have other places of learning: libraries, churches, museums, concert halls, theatres, and clubs. But in so much of today's world, you have to go there. Public or private, it is required by law.

This special issue features several articles that focus on innovative thought and action that people and institutions have mounted in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. In all cases, professional educators from different countries and at different levels and subject matter specialties take the reader through the overwhelming process of realization, acceptance, and motivation to act.

It should be said that professionals in education have in so very many cases responded as heroes in this ongoing crisis. Our authors come from Russia, Germany, Canada, Australia, China, and the United States. Their themes, however, are not provincial in any sense. Collectively, they give us a sense of a world caught off guard by a pandemic of epic proportions, as well as a positive and constructive view of what we might learn and how we might improve the future of education.

Nataliya Komarova and Tatiana Suslova investigate and document a number of issues facing immigrant children in the state schools of Russia. They point to the many acculturation hurdles such children face, ranging from language and cultural differences to availability of effective instruction and appropriate materials. The challenges are faced by parents and children, to be sure, but there is also the problem of teacher preparation in dealing with children who have recently arrived. What works in typical programs may or may not be suitable for second-language learning and the cultural adaptations teachers are expected to make in order to ensure that teaching/learning is both appealing and efficient. The problem is further complicated by the fact that immigrants come not just from one culture, but from many. They suggest a variety of

options that focus on cultural sensitivity as well as adaptive instructional designs. What is obvious is that teachers, parents, and children find themselves in a world to which none of them are accustomed.

Bianca Lange and Heike Ohlbrecht write about the tensions in Germany that have arisen over the displacement of children from school to home as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. They remind us that while schools have been disrupted, so have homes. As schools closed, the burdens of day care, instruction, and upbringing, which schools share with the home, shifted almost exclusively to the home in unforeseen measure. Their careful inquiry in the form of surveys early on (2020) and well into the pandemic (2021) inform the reader with the disquieting information that pre-existing gender inequities were both reinforced and increased, as women have become disproportionately burdened with the many facets of childcare in the home during the pandemic.

AnnRené Joseph notes the heavy toll the Covid-19 pandemic has taken on arts classes in schools and related settings. Dance, vocal performance, theatre, and band and orchestra have been particularly curtailed to the point of near-complete shutdown and closure. The social nature of the performing arts, where deeper breathing and movement are so often required, becomes an at-risk venture in a time where air-borne particulates in closed rooms pose greater hazards of contamination and spread of the virus. She utilizes an online survey technique to gather important data from teachers of arts classes regarding their reactions and actions during times of sequester and school closures. She is particularly interested in the resilience factor, and she reports a gratifying level of optimism for the future of performing arts education in spite of the current hard times.

Kas Mazurek and Margret Winzer deconstruct key "inclusion" elements of Article 24 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act. Their critique of Article 24, which focuses on educational implications for Poland, Germany, and Australia, includes observations and conclusions of "inherent tensions and dialectical contradictions" between Article 24 and certain realities of school life designed to meet estimable goals. Article 24 clearly states that students with disabilities should not be discriminated against and should be able to participate in the general educational system. People of good will are found on both sides of the issue of general vs. special instruction, and the problem has been around for a while. Mazurek and Winzer offer a cogent argument that the realities of Article 24 have failed to bring about satisfactory results.

Marcus Bussey asks the question, "what can Covid teach us?" He argues passionately for a "pedagogy of presence," and asks the reader to speculate, to imagine a relational universe, one in which affective considerations assume a prominent place in the educational experience. He envisions the possibilities of a curriculum of education that finds space for such relational values as "love, intimacy, and presence." Bussey laments the fact that current technocratic practices have captured the life space of schooling, narrowing the mission at the expense of needed human emotions. His article exemplifies and encourages the idea of expansive, visionary thinking regarding the future of education, and viewing the Covid experience as a time to step back and reinvent the future of education.

Aleksei Mikhailov and Maria Burlakova describe changes that have and will be taking place at Shuya Stage University in Russia as a result of the pandemic. As they imply, sometimes it takes an outside, catastrophic event to force changes, some of which may have been needed all along. Despite the unfortunate circumstances that have arisen over the past couple of years, they

strike a clearly optimistic note regarding their university's future. They describe the forced occurrence of a social, emotional, and academic lockdown of the university. They share their experience of a quick, jerry-rigged set of adaptations to distance learning followed on by careful planning for a future in which flexible course offerings will accommodate both face-to-face and distance learning. Theirs is an intriguing case study in which administrators, instructors, and students have worked cooperatively to build a better, more sustainable delivery system, one which incorporates new technologies and emerging learning theories in ways will meet the needs of a changing student population.

Jing Xiang and Zaoxiu Fu introduce the reader to what they call a "comprehensive practical activity curriculum" for school children. The curriculum takes its place in the well-founded progressive theoretical tradition of exploration, inquiry, childhood curiosity, and problem solving. Xiang and Fu invite readers to enter a world in which children move about, inquire, create, imagine, work together, and reflect. Societal aspects of service to others and the world and protection of self, others, and the environment are emphasized. As the title suggests, value is placed on hands-on learning, processes of investigation, cooperative spirit, and building feelings of community and responsibility.