

BOLD LEADERSHIP IN A TIME OF CRISIS *(continued from previous page)*

shift. I hope we will find ways that workers *at all jobs* will be able to stay home when they are sick.

Your leadership team at NCSM spent time together every day in March. We worked hard to provide strong, focused leadership. Mona Toncheff, Paul Gray, and I communicated every day by phone, Zoom, email, or text. Many of these meetings included different teams on the NCSM Board. The 2020 NCSM Virtual Conference, one of the many outcomes of these meetings, was an amazing experience and surpassed all of the expectations we had when we started to plan. Over 9,000 people registered for the conference and all of the sessions were well-attended. I appreciated hearing from some of the leaders we would have heard had we been on site. They gave of themselves, even when the stresses of the pandemic surrounded them. Mona continues to be a strong leader in this unprecedented situation we find in our world. We are lucky to have her. Thank you for your support of NCSM, and I look forward to seeing you face-to-face in St. Louis and Atlanta.

As you read this, I hope that the pandemic of COVID-19 is fading into memory, and that we are coming out on the other side. What have you learned about



2020 NCSM Virtual Conference workers

leadership during these unprecedented times? What would you add to these points? What held you steady as you made your way? By sharing our experiences and telling the stories of these days of crisis, we will learn from each other, grow stronger, and be ready for the next challenge. #NCSMLeadingDuringCrisis 🌱

CONNECTION BEFORE CONTENT— MINDFULNESS BEFORE MANAGEMENT

By Christina Lincoln-Moore | Assistant Principal, Los Angeles Unified School District

AS AN ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL OF A K-8 SCHOOL IN THE LOS ANGELES UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT (LAUSD), I SEE SITUATIONS THAT BRING MY HEART JOY AND FACTORS THAT BREAK MY HEART.

Before the school closures, I loved going into classrooms where the energy was high and students were actively engaged in their lessons raising their hands to eagerly speak their mind. I remember one day in an 8th-grade history class, a young lady made a connection between her Cuban heritage and the political cartoon, [American Progress](#). I felt pride well up in my heart as she spoke so eloquently. I know that her teacher put in the time to build relationships with his students. They knew they were cared for, that their opinions were valued, and they felt safe to engage in



Christina Lincoln-Moore

friendly and sometimes heated repartee. Now, in this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, my heart is deeply troubled, not only for the tragic loss of life and livelihood, but for the mental health of our students.

On April 23, 2020, NCTM sponsored a webinar for their *100 Days of Professional Learning* in celebration of 100 years as an organization. On that occasion the webinar featured José Vilson, New York mathematics educator, author of *This Is Not A Test: A New Narrative*

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on *Race, Class, and Education*, and Executive Director of EduColor (an organization dedicated to race and social justice issues in education), together with Marian Dingle, Georgia elementary educator and national mathematics speaker. Their session was entitled, “*How We Move from Equality to Equity and Justice in Mathematics Teaching.*” During this powerful, thought-provoking presentation, Nicole Bridge, mathematics educator from Rhode Island, made a comment that made me deeply reflect. Nicole asked the audience: “How much of our day was about controlling students?” “What do we do now that we have no control?” WOW! It was the proverbial mic drop! The validity of those questions certainly pierced my heart. I have observed the rhythm of my school and painfully acknowledged it is very much a system of control that is counterintuitive to my progressive constructivist schema.

Realistically during this pandemic, there is no enforcement of compulsory education. We are not taking attendance, their grades will be that same from the day they left as of March 13th, and there’s no way to truly make children log into class. Barring external factors like internet access and the like, what determines who shows up to the Zoom meeting? A litany of factors explain why some teachers have more online student engagement than others. However, the one factor that strikes me as the most important is the teacher-to-student relationship that was developed prior to school closures due to the coronavirus. My answer to why some teachers have higher online engagement is simply, “Relationship-centered teaching makes the difference in who shows up!” Theodore Roosevelt profoundly said, “Nobody cares how much you know, until they know how much you care” [<https://www.brainyquote.com>]. As we ponder what to teach and what standards to address, let’s focus on the mental health of our students, rather than grades and assignments. Let’s rethink the established control systems that we once practiced and embrace our new reality that those systems will no longer be viable. “Education that is too regimented, too centralized, too much like a factory, prepares students for a life of unquestioning obedience and unreflective conformity” (Astore, 2013).

In the Summer 2018 NCSM *Newsletter*, I wrote an article for the *Women of Color in Mathematics* series. In the article I shared the following:

Daniel Goleman (a psychologist and CEO of Emotional Intelligence Services, wrote in his 1998 book, *Working with Emotional Intelligence*, that emotional intelligence (EQ) is a better predictor of success than Intelligence Quotient (IQ). EQ is now sixth of the top 10 in-demand skills of 2020. In order to meet our students’ needs, we must place this at a greater priority. I am so excited about California’s [Social Emotional Learning Guiding Principles](#). The need for greater social emotional intelligence is clearly evident; just look at the nightly newscasts. This information drives me into action.

The same rings true today—Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and relationship-centered teaching is the difference between a Zoom class session with five students and a class that fills up the screen with student faces. California’s SEL Guiding Principles explicitly state, “Name SEL as not a ‘nice to have,’ but a ‘must have’ to ensure student success in school, work, and community.” Furthermore, “Build the capacity of both students and adults through an intentional focus on relationship-entered learning environments and by offering research-based experiences that cultivate core social and emotional competencies.”

As educational and teacher leaders, let’s resolve ourselves to build cohesive relationships with students by doing the following:

- Have an SEL check-in to begin each learning session with questions like, “What words would you use to describe where your head is? And where your heart is?” that students can answer in the chat box and share out if they choose.
- Exude joy, compassion, and warmth to every human you encounter online. [Bucket-filling](#) yields immeasurable results.
- Focus on projects that will encourage productive family time rather than graded assignments.
- Have Fridays be just about connection and mindfulness. Perhaps, as a class play a game like

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bingo. Students can design bingo cards for the class to share. Take time to practice mindful breathing or teach stress resiliency strategies and mindful poses.

- Have a weekly parent-only meeting that parents can ask questions and discuss issues to build community.
- Invest and implement in a robust SEL curriculum and training such as [Dynamic Mindfulness](#).

Above all else, show grace. Grace and flexibility are the key components to not only surviving but thriving in our current pandemic environment. As the late, great Rita F. Pierson stated, “Every child deserves a

champion, an adult who will never give up on them, who understands the power of connection, and insists that they become the best that they can possibly be” (Pierson, n.d.). ✿

Christina Lincoln-Moore is an innovative constructivist educational leader who is tenacious and dedicated to mindful project-based learning to engender mathematics identities. She taught for LAUSD from 1996 until 2014 and, she is currently an assistant principal. Christina presents nationally, focusing on equity and access of African-Americans to algebra and the integration of Social Emotional Learning into mathematics. She is a co-author of *NCSM Essential Actions Framework for Leadership in Mathematics Education* (2020).

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SUDDENLY, IT'S ALL ONLINE: TEACHING DURING A PANDEMIC

By Kim Romain | NCSM Inspiration! Associate Editor (2020–2021) (@kim_willosmom)
with Sandie Gilliam | NCSM Inspiration! Editor



Kim Romain

I’m overwhelmed! In all my 42 years of teaching, I’ve never been through any kind of shutdown—major or minor. Yet, I know the many questions that teachers currently have: How do I teach K–12 online? How can I possibly and thoroughly cover the material students are supposed to learn by the end of the year? What will happen to the ACT and SAT college tests that students are expected to take when they can’t be in a room of test takers? What will happen to this incomplete coursework for this year? Do we start all over again? Do we start the next year with much of the material we didn’t cover and then move along? Do we ignore about what wasn’t presented and just proceed, or do we use the missed material as an introduction to the new learnings when needed? What is the possibility that this virus will go into a second phase? Until there is a vaccine, will something similar happen again next year?

In time, many of the questions will be considered by school districts and colleges, but the one that seems to be currently in progress and has the possibility to be necessary next year is “How do I teach K–12 online?”—Sandie Gilliam

I DON’T KNOW HOW YOU FELT THOSE FIRST FEW WEEKS OF THIS COVID-19 teaching crisis, but I felt like they were the longest year ever! I mean, who knew that the majority of us in the U.S. would have to *figure out* what it meant to teach solely online. Sure ... I had thought about it and had

marveled at those teachers who had flipped their classrooms and were adept at teaching in this format, and as a mathematics facilitator, I engaged in conversations with teachers about ways to ramp up their use of technology to teach mathematics.

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