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## A Singular Paradigm for Understanding the Necessary Skills, Mindsets, and Attitudes of Effective Schools, Leaders, and Educators in the New Normal of Today

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PRAE: A Singular Paradigm for Understanding the Necessary Skills, Mindsets, and Attitudes of  
Effective Schools, Leaders, and Educators in the *New Normal* of Today

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PRAE: A Singular Paradigm for Understanding the Necessary Skills, Mindsets, and Attitudes of Effective Schools, Leaders, and Educators in the *New Normal* of Today

Brandman University consists of educators, scholars, and practitioners dedicated to serving adult learners. The University's School of Education (SOE) is practitioner-oriented, rather than research-focused, meaning the professionals at the heart of this institution, center their work and expertise on preparing and supporting the frontline workers in education: teachers, administrators, counselors, needs-based specialists, and support staff. Presently, in the midst of the current pandemic crisis, some 60 million educators and 1.5 billion students in over 190 countries are now, or were throughout the spring of 2020, out of school due to school closures (Strauss, 2020). This situation is, for American teachers and administrators, in their lifetime unprecedented (San Diego County Office of Education, 2020a). The public-school system of the United States was not prepared to face such challenges as widespread closures and millions of students are expected to continue their learning through some semblance of distance or remote learning. Nonetheless, an idea attributed to President John F. Kennedy illustrates the possibilities hiding below the surface of the current situation: "The Chinese use two brush strokes to write the word 'crisis.' One brush stroke stands for danger; the other for opportunity. In a crisis, be aware of the danger — but recognize the opportunity" (as cited in Marchetti, 2020).

Consequently, educational professionals have an unforeseen opportunity to make meaningful differences in how they approach their craft. Renewing the ability to hone in on strategies one brings to the altered landscape of teaching and learning, in addition to the various skills and attitudes at the forefront of their daily responsibilities within the

community, has become an urgent imperative rather than an option for the future. When individuals collaborate, share, and mobilize, meaningful change is possible; it was with this understanding that Brandman University's School of Education (SOE) launched its 2020 Spring Faculty Retreat.

Expert groups scrutinized timely content and data in an effort to uncover and juxtapose the relationships of what is known regarding the best of modern educational theory and practice, what is desirable for the learners of today to be prepared to take their place in the world of tomorrow, and the reality of education at this time of pandemic closures, cutbacks, and continuous uncertainties (Kamenetz, 2020; Robinson, 2020; San Diego County Office of Education, 2020; Yahoo News Staff, 2020). With their data, representatives from each expert group shared findings, insights, and recommendations in terms of what would be possible and desirable for educators in light of various challenges presented in the current environment. These findings were then collaboratively examined and deconstructed through the various focal paradigms of three groups of curriculum teams: credentialing, mastery practitionership, and leadership. This work culminated in presentations to the entire faculty on the individual teams' recommendations for crucial skills, aptitudes, attitudes, and actions, for not only Brandman SOE faculty and students (mostly P-12 teachers and administrators), but for the greater educational community across the United States.

The original intent of this paper was to serve as a means of empowering both the micro- Brandman University School of Education students and faculty- and the macro community of American educational professionals with timely perspectives and guidance in support of the successful launching of the 2020/2021 academic year in the face of this

*new normal*. However, what emerged from the process was the unexpected identification of a corresponding concept: *Reciprocal Altruism* (Trivers, 1971). This conceptual model has most often been applied to studies of evolutionary biology (Stephens, 1996), yet there are also direct links to Game Theory and a modicum of studies exploring connections to democratic principles in public schooling (Hanhela, 2016). Further exploration of this construct led to the creation of a new paradigm that potentially offers a unique insight for guiding the future thoughts and actions of educators across a spectrum of academic foci and responsibilities.

### **Process**

Twenty-nine faculty members, five administrators, and five support staff of Brandman's School of Education met synchronously, via Zoom, conferencing online to engage in two days of virtual meetings. Collaboratively, the group examined several informational articles offering multiple perspectives, issues, and potential solutions related to the opening of P-12 schools across the United States for the 2020-2021 academic year. The ultimate goal of these efforts was for each person to engage in a dialectic process that would empower each individual to walk away from this experience with informed responses to two overarching questions, specifically designed to harness the varied expertise and experience of the entire faculty and its leadership:

- a) What are the desirable changes for the future of P-12 environments?
- b) What new skills, mindsets, attitudes do our Brandman students need to be effective in their educational settings of the future?

Each curriculum team presented their collaborative responses to the two focus questions in a unique, creative fashion. One team enacted a game show (see Appendix A),

another shared a *help wanted ad* for the desired teacher of today/tomorrow (see Appendix B), and the third was a series of *reporter on the street* interviews with super heroes with skill sets that communicated the team's take on the most essential skills, mindsets, attitudes educators need to be effective in their schools of the future (see Appendix C). The information offered by each curriculum team was captured in three artifacts (see Appendices A, B, and C), the notes used in creating those artifacts, and the video archive of the live presentations. A team of SOE faculty culled through the data to identify commonalities; these were then sorted into the independent components of the *Affective*, *Behavioral*, and *Cognitive* domains of learning Venn diagram to illustrate the findings (see Figure 1).

The resulting, multifaceted take-aways were shared in real time by three groups of curriculum teams through presentations designed to both inform and engage all participants. The cumulative findings of the groups were studied for common threads and themes. What became clear through this examination process was a combination of ideal behaviors, skills, and attitudes deemed essential for academic success. The tool that was employed to identify, sort, and clarify these ideas was the *Affective*, *Behavioral*, and *Cognitive* domains of learning (Clark, 2015). These domains of critical thought come from Dr. Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy (Clark, 2015). A general breakdown of each domain is as follows:

- Cognitive: mental skills (*knowledge*);
- Affective: growth in feelings or emotional areas (*attitude or self*); and
- Psychomotor [Behavioral]: manual or physical skills (*skills*) (Clark, 2015).

A basic  $n=3$  Venn diagram (Ruskey & Weston, 2018) was employed as a means to initially sort the various takeaways, or pillars of understanding, into each one's corresponding, independent domain, and then as a means to clearly identify any overlap (intersections).

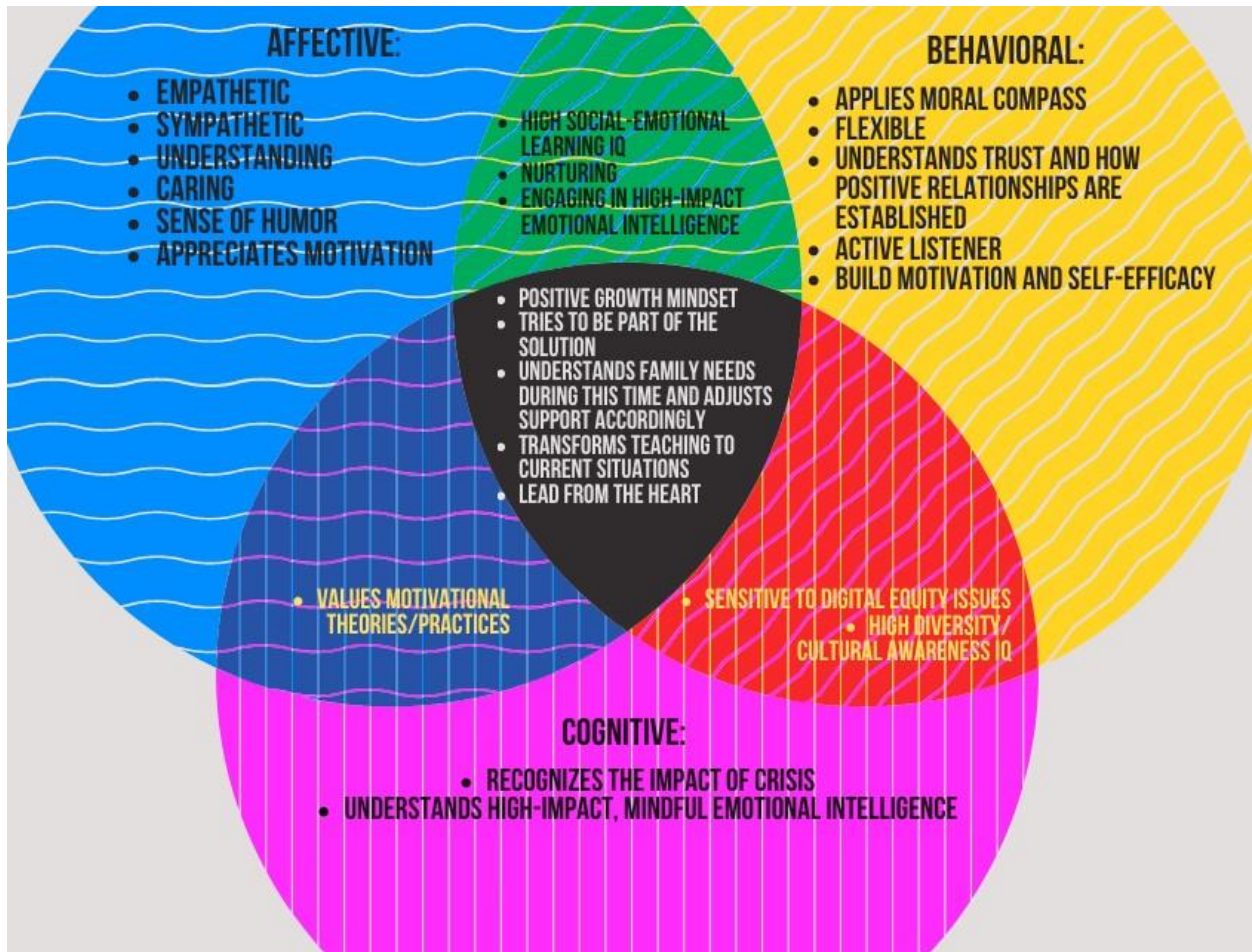


Figure 1. The Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive Domains of Critical Thought Venn Diagram. This figure shows classifications of expert findings from the Spring 2020 SOE retreat.

### Findings

Twenty-five individual components were identified through the initial process. After that breakdown, these independent components were sorted and classified into their respective areas of the Venn diagram to offer a clear visual of the shared themes from the

curriculum teams across the various domains. Of the initial components identified, 24% directly related to the affective domain; 20% connected with the behavioral domain; 8% correlated with the cognitive domain, and 28% of responses overlapped with one other domain. Five pillars of understanding, or 20%, directly aligned with all three domains:

- Positive Growth Mindset
- Tries to be part of the solution
- Understands family needs during this time and adjusts support accordingly
- Transforms teaching to current situations
- Lead from the Heart

### **Deconstruction of Findings**

The strong focus on *Affective* domain-oriented skills, along with the correlating *Behavioral* and *Cognitive* aptitudes from the expert recommendations was an unexpected outcome. At this time, a great deal of information on how to best serve the needs of schools and students in the upcoming academic year is focused on physical behaviors for health concerns and pedagogical strategies to compensate for the lost academic rigor of the 2020 spring school due to school closures (Kamenetz, 2020; Robinson, 2020; San Diego County Office of Education, 2020; Yahoo News Staff, 2020). Thus, the clarity of the import of mindfully integrating *Affective* domain skills into one's professional practice aligns with Jones' and Kahn's (2020) summation of the Council of Distinguished Scientists declaration that the "social, emotional, cognitive, linguistic, academic—are [all] deeply intertwined in the brain and in behavior. All are central to learning" (p. 4).



In an effort to fully understand how each of the five expert recommendations aligns with the three domains, specific examples and verbiage were culled from the faculty’s live presentations and preparatory notes (see Figure 2).

	Affective	Behavioral	Cognitive
Positive Growth Mindset	Teachers support students through experiential learning to authentically grow from personal perseverance, grit, and iterative learning	Teachers and Admin/Leadership role model learning new skills/adapting to different ways of working and are vulnerable and honest about the positive as well as dealing/managing setbacks	Admin/Leadership harness Political Intelligence when addressing issues of equity and access
Tries to be part of the solution	Teachers and Admin/Leadership take the time to craft genuine relationships with students and recognize each one as a unique individual	Open forums, groups conversations, and town halls are held to open lines of communication on a regular basis	Professional development options are offered based upon the needs of the teachers in real time
Understands family needs during this time and adjusts support accordingly	Admin/Leadership offer greater flexibility in scheduling for working families	Teachers embed multiple opportunities for student choice and voice in learning assignments and assessments that supports student interests and cultural openness/awareness	Questionnaires and various needs assessments gather current data on the situations of the students, teachers, and support staff to inform decision-making
Transforms teaching to current situations	Teachers role model flexibility and fluidity in the midst of change	Transitions between on-ground, blended, and fully online learning as necessary	Facile with curriculum design and multiple forms of assessment

Lead from the Heart	Teachers communicate regularly with families and offer online opportunities for regular check-ins	Admin/Leadership form and work with coalitions of multiple stakeholders to make timely decisions	Admin/Leadership engage in Possibility Thinking to solve current issues and proactively engage peers and community resources
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Figure 2. Examples for the 3 Domain Components as Elements of an Effective Educational Practice. This figure shows key findings from the artifacts.

Collectively, the faculty and leadership within the School of Education play a vital role in structuring the learning experiences and outcomes for future educators. By understanding the fundamental ideas relating to the three domains discussed above, the SOE has the propensity to better mold and prepare effective educational practitioners and leaders for the future, especially in what will be determined as the *new normal* in education. By analyzing and synthesizing the mindsets and skills necessary to be efficient educators in a pandemic/post-pandemic society, Brandman University’s SOE is uniquely positioned to deliver the most effective and dynamic curricula and programs to successfully prepare students for the future. This forward thinking and passion for forging ahead inspired the idea, presented in the next section, of Professional Reciprocal Altruism for Educators (PRAE).

**Recommendations and Conclusions**

Upon reflecting on the five pillars of understanding and the juxtaposition that led to their identification, the authors had an epiphany. There exists a theory from a different discipline that appeared to embrace, not only the individual and collaborative efforts from the retreat, but the essence of everything that was uncovered. This theory, reciprocal altruism, when examined in great depth, inspired the creation of a new concept, one more

directly connected to the expert take-aways, an intention not yet heavily explored in the field of education: Professional Reciprocal Altruism in Education, or PRAE.

The idea of reciprocal altruism was coined in 1971 by American evolutionary biologist and socio-biologist Robert Trivers. Trivers (1971) believed that an individual could demonstrate a specific act in order to increase the chances of one's success if it could depend on the behaviors of others in the future. This concept is similar to the *give-and-take* approach in which one gives something in order to receive something back at a later time. Levi (2017) suggests that reciprocal altruism plays a role in how well a community or society thrives. By engaging in reciprocal altruism, a cooperative culture is produced. The dynamic is that everyone is working to improve the success of the entire group (Levi, 2017). Reciprocal altruism "offers a model of appropriate behavior, but, equally importantly, it sets in motion a process of reciprocity that defines expectations of those in the society" (Levi, 2017, para. 4). Essentially, if the norms are compelling and strong enough, others will adopt the belief system as his or her own, making for a more unified system (community). The overall goal of reciprocal altruism is that individual's actions afford outcomes that are sustainable and long-lasting, paving the way for continuous development and ongoing improvements for the greater community.

Focusing in on the details of reciprocal altruism challenged the authors to explore this idea in educational settings. Everyone within the School of Education has been working tirelessly and diligently, upfront, to ensure the programs and courses are meeting the needs of all students during this pandemic. Hence, all of this effort, dedication, and time being spent in the present is a direct response to the needs of the future, which were evaluated throughout the retreat. Work hard now, reap the benefits later. This correlates

directly to the on-going improvement cycle for all courses within SOE. Curricula and assessment data is evaluated on a regular basis as a means of ensuring that what is being taught and learned is the most relevant for the students to put into immediate practice. Faculty are empowered to make necessary changes, that proved to be essential as school closures began to occur. For example, a variety of new technologies, especially those suddenly made free to educators (i.e. Seesaw and Zoom), were integrated into coursework to afford students the opportunity to engage with and learn tools in meaningful ways so they could then apply these practices immediately for their own use (personally, academically, and in their careers).

The thought behind this is that the transformation of the educational programs, being modified as a response to the pandemic, will better serve current and future teachers and administrators with the skills and knowledge necessary to teach and meet the needs of the community moving forward into the post-pandemic phase. This led to the idea of PRAE; a conceptual construct for understanding that the preparations and decisions made by educational professionals *now* are influential in designing the future.

PRAE has the potential to empower educators, at all levels, to engage in a proactive approach in relation to the entire learning process. When the collaborative nature of the entire educational community is valued, transformation is fluid and immediate. The short-lived changes that are often applied and demanded in education now become perpetual and everlasting.

PRAE evolves from a cooperative effort that encompasses the relevancy of altruism within an educational environment. Figure 3 illustrates the progression of thoughts, ideas, and research collected and synthesized as a result of the initial collaboration from the retreat, to the

researched theory of reciprocal altruism, to conclude with the authors’ concept of PRAE in action.

ABC Takeaways for Educators	Human Altruism (Trivers, p. 45)	PRAE
Positive Growth Mindset	Helping in times of danger (e.g. accidents, predation, intraspecific aggression)	Coaching and supporting our students to have a positive growth mindset and outlook during the pandemic to ensure they understand the needs for the <i>new norm</i> in education
Tries to be part of the solution	Sharing food	Working proactively to find solutions and best teaching practices to support all in the greater Brandman community
Understands family needs during this time and adjusts support accordingly	Helping the sick, the wounded, or the very young and old	Having empathy and compassion for those affected
Transforms teaching to current situations	Sharing implements	Develops new pedagogical skills for future teachers and educational leaders to implement into the new settings
Lead from the heart	Sharing knowledge	Transformation in education

*Figure 3.* Conceptual Alignment of PRAE in Action. This figure demonstrates the alignment of thoughts, ideas, and researched theories from conception to closure.

PRAE is a new concept; therefore, there is opportunity for future research.

Throughout the process of crafting this paper, potential threads for application delved into areas such as John Dewey and *Democracy in Education*, professional development on transformation in education, and connections to innovative approaches to growth mindset

and the skills necessary to be influential leaders in education. “Every success story is a tale of constant adaptation, revision and change.” —Richard Branson.

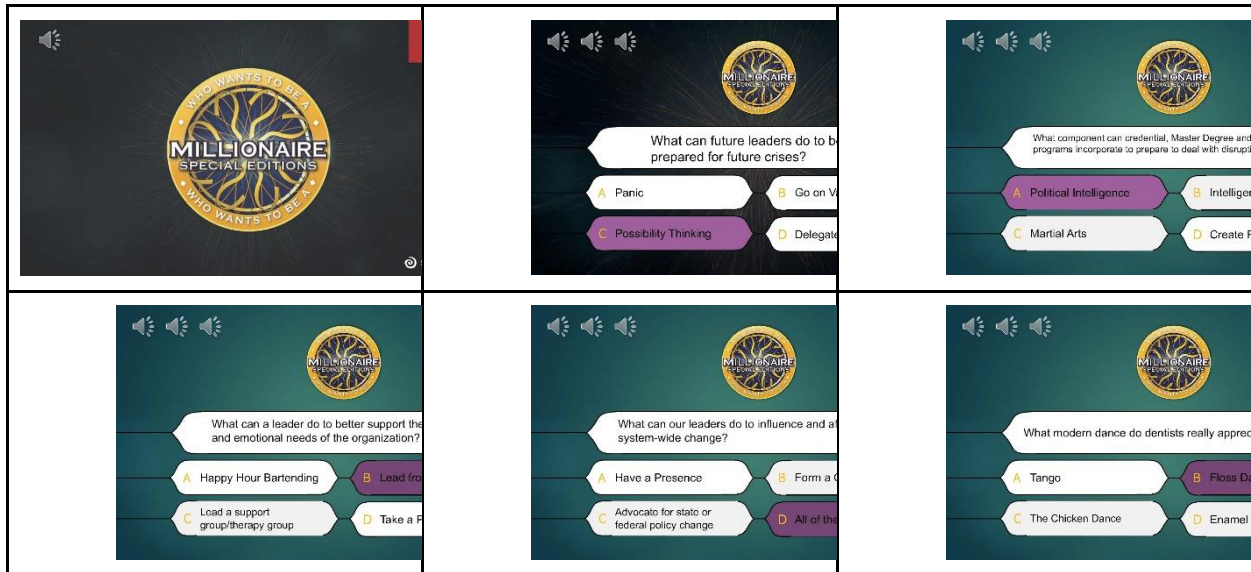
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Appendix A



Appendix B



### MINIMUM QUALIFICATIONS

- Expertise in social emotional learning
- Video producer
- Content expert
- Technology guru
- Able to teach online and on ground
- Parent consultant
- Time management expert
- Able to create and manage online platforms
- Professional organizer
- Psychology expert/counseling background
- Nurturer
- Online classroom management expert
- High diversity IQ
- Great emotional intelligence
- Curriculum developer
- Health & hygiene expert
- Relationship builder
- Flexible
- Innovative
- Energetic and animated
- Good listener
- Meet the socio-emotional needs of students and parents
- Maintain a sense of humor
- Able to gain and maintain credibility with all stakeholders
- Remediate your own tech issues
- Excellent stress management
- Assessment creator
- Feedback wizard
- Expert in meeting needs of all students (online)
- Able to engage students virtually and
- Communication expertise
- Expert at healing centered engagement/trauma informed care
- Ability to effectively manage online and onsite classrooms
- Understanding of the impact of the crisis
- Knowledge of academic and technology standards
- Virtual babysitter
- Walking dictionary
- Bends like a tree (flexible)

- Ability to connect virtually with others
- Sensitive to the needs of others
- Cultural IQ
- Motivated to motivate
- Multi-tasker
- Able to teach long hours with minimal pay
- Barista
- Sensitive to digital equity issues
- Morale booster

*Looking for a challenge? Are you comfortable with ambiguity? Are you steady, humorous, and kind? Do you love children? Are you a self-starter and a multi-tasker? Do you enjoy long hours online? Have you tested negative for Zoom fatigue?*

# Apply today!

Budget to be determined

[Music Teacher Creates A Soothing Song About COVID-19 That Is Not Blood-Curdling At All](#)

## Appendix C

## SpEd, PPSP/C, &amp; MAE CT notes for Big Ideas and Presentation

- Empowerment - how do we empower teachers to adapt, differentiate, accommodate, to go beyond the box schools put them in. What does that empowerment look like?
- Adaptability & Flexibility - to be able to deal with the constantly changing environment
- Understanding Rights & Roles as teachers - opportunity to take back the power we should have as practitioners.
- Collaboration, Consultation, and Community - shifting to that model
- Gumby!! - he adapts to his environment, he works with his friends to help him out.
- Leadership - not allowing others to speak for us. Training needs to happen - equip teachers with the tools they need.
- Meet students (our Brandman students) & teachers where they are now. What are students (P-12) going through now?
- Resources for teachers - social and emotional, to support students' needs. Be prepared to have resources, and to collect them from others.
- Teaching and learning has to be creative and innovative - done in a thoughtful and purposeful way.
- Have a contingency plan.
- Don't reinvent the wheel - make use of the resources that are already out there.

BIG IDEAS:

1. Empowerment - empower teachers to determine what to teach and how to teach it, and utilize technology. Be curriculum masters.
2. Reinventing the learning environment - online. Help students transition easily to online and make connections back to in-person. Learning that happens outside of the classroom (virtual & in-person)
  - a. Personalization & differentiating learning online.
3. Resources - leveraging and accessing
  - . People, community & materials
  - a. For supporting mental health issues
  - b. Collaboration

Live Interview each of us talking about our superpowers related back to our big ideas.

Annie - there's a new group of Superheroes in town! I'm going to interview them so we can learn about their SuperPowers!

1. Sue, Thierry, & Cheryl
  - a. Sue - The Oracle; superpower is the ability to see into and change the future
    - i. Have the knowledge, skill and authority to foresee and respond to the future by making changes to my academic program including curriculum and instruction as needed to to raise the educational experience for my students.
  - b. Thierry - Cyborg
  - c. Cheryl - Gumby
    - .texture and malleable form allows change, bump of wisdom, magical ability to shift, leave a place better than I found it

2. Kimberly & the Nicoles:

a. Nicole N: Hello everyone! "I am Connections Cowgirl!" I take my magic rope and I throw a wide loop that brings all people together!"

b. Nicole B: Princess Personalization! I travel the universe waving my wand and creating personalized learning!

c. Kimberly: **Transition to Virtual Learning Lady** - "Reinventing the learning environment"

3. Lynn, Susan, Maureen, Tonya

**Lynn - superpower = Organization Girl**

- Ensure that all resources are organized and accessible
- Avoid duplication or irrelevant resources
- Address the needs of all stakeholders
- Seek input for ideas
- Reorganize/standardize when needed



**Susan - superpower = U Matter Girl**

- **Undeniable BELIEF in Them** - Letting Them Know They Matter to YOU!
- **Meet & Greet Students** - Greet Them into Class
- **Acknowledge & Encouragement** - Remind Students by Pointing out Successes!
- **Try to Implement a Connection** - Conduct "Getting To Know You", Activities! A Survey even??

- **Take Time** - To Providing a 15 Minute Opening Well Check Discussion (CICO)
- **Exercise Active Listening** - "Do You Hear What They Are Actually Saying?"
- **Resume Again EVERY Time You See Them**, that "UMATTER" to me!

**Maureen - superpower = Elastic Girl**

**Tonya - superpower = Resilience= DIVOC**

- Acknowledge the "New Normal" discuss safety, roles and responsibilities for health and safety for all staff and students. Take a health and safety campus class walk to locate hand wash stations, gloves, mask and sanitizers.
- Converse- Allow yourself to be vulnerable, talk about your feelings related to this pandemic (shock, anxious, fearful, vulnerable, depressed, experienced loss) .
- Behind the mask- Smile, emotions drive the ora of the classroom.
- Encourage- students to seek help from a trusted adult (Counselor, School Psychologist, Social Worker or Mental Health Professional), when in need of emotional guidance/support.
- Adaptability- Allow time for students to re-acclimate into class (flexibility in schedules, socializing in seat or at a social distance for the first few minutes of class or after.
- Self Care- Smile, take long mental health walks, talk about your feelings, make new friends in the class and have patience.
- We are stronger together- In the face of adversity we (our nation, students, and families) will bounce back from this difficult experience, (COVID-19 PANDEMIC). Each of us are required to do our part in protecting one another.

All things will all work out for OUR good!

Resilience is OUR SUPERPOWER!