

Math Takes A Hit During Pandemic



By Dr. R. Pletsch

The websites are always filled with an educational look at the pandemic. These range in all directions. I recently read an article you might find interesting. It is written by Larry Ferlazzo with the help from other educators. He writes that there are many people who say our educators have learned a lot about their field during the pandemic. He questions if they will use the time to absorb that knowledge.

I believe we will have more pandemics because politicians like the power they have. It will become easier to declare an emergency.

Ferlazzo believes that stats indicate that poorer neighborhoods had been affected the most. Statistically he shows they are more populated by minority students. These kids are less likely to attend private schools that did not close. They lost school meals, though many districts offered take home food. Often these meals were not picked up. The other huge problem was the need for computers and access to the internet. I know, here in Chicago, a great effort was made to rectify this, but many schools had very low attendance.

Another issue concerning race was that students saw what appeared to be mainly white union members protesting, demanding that schools be kept closed. We all realize despite how the groups performed, and the reasons for their attending. The perception came to them from the TV news reports. The news went to the big cities, which often have large minority populations, whether a fact or not. The students often came to the conclusion that it was the white teachers.

Larry Ferlazzo believes that Math was the subject that was set back the most. While all subjects had the issues listed above, there is not a teacher who wouldn't say they had a parent come up to them and say "yes, Math was my worst subject, too". When the schools were shut down, no one was prepared for the long haul. Anxiety hit many parents and other caregivers with their common fear of "new Math".

Some districts offered programs to parents, but for as many reasons as you can think, the large majority ignored new Math and the parents and caregivers sought out friends and family to help. Some were lucky, others not. They were left with two ways to deal with the situation. One, many resorted to the only way they knew and that is what many of you have done. After all they will learn some Math which is better than option two, the students did what they knew and did not attempt the others.

So if Math seems to be difficult for your student this year, make sure you stay in touch with the teacher. I'm sure your child will not be alone. Do the best you can, and encourage your children that in a short time, they will understand this new Math.