

Pivot. Prior to March 2020, this is a word that I'm pretty sure I only heard used at my son's basketball practice. Then in March, our school, along with the rest of the world, went on lockdown. In order to finish out the school year, teachers provided instruction via Zoom, hand-delivered packets, emailed packets, made phone calls home to students and parents, and so much more. The word "pivot" quickly became a buzzword in the educational realm. Teachers were asked to pivot at every turn. Be ready for this. Be ready for that. Be ready for something that you don't even understand at this point in time. And, guess what? We did.

Since that time, the pivoting has continued. We went back to school in the fall of 2020 in masks and with desks 6' (or more apart). We moved classrooms, used spaces like auditoriums and cafeterias for instruction, and continued to pivot every time we were asked to do something new. Kids in the classroom 6' apart with masks? No problem. Wear gloves and clean the desks (and materials) in between each class? No problem. Move to the cafeteria and hold your classes there? No problem. Teach kids who are in quarantine via Zoom? No problem. Teach a hybrid class where part of your kids are in the classroom and others are at home via Zoom? No problem. Teach in person for a set period of time and then go back to instruction via Zoom only for two or three weeks to mitigate the spread? No problem. And again, guess what? We did all of this and more.

The interesting thing about all of this, however, is that, historically, teachers have always pivoted. We just didn't have a buzzword to describe it. We are experts at making adjustments each and every day, sometimes each and every class period. Teaching the Emancipation Proclamation and realizing students aren't grasping Lincoln's sentence structure or word choice? No problem. Let me write a scaffolded document to help them comprehend better. Providing writing instruction and realizing that students aren't ready to tie all the parts and pieces of their arguments together without additional assistance? No problem. Let me spend my plan time (or my at-home time) writing sentence stems and outlines to help them reach the end goal. Giving a lesson over pronoun-antecedent agreement and realizing that the information isn't clicking? No worries. Let me go out on the Internet or YouTube and find a catchy video to reinforce the concepts in the lesson and help kids understand more. You see, that's what good teachers do all the time. Pivot. We pivot every time we get a new student who needs additional accommodations to meet an Individual Education Plan (IEP) or a 504 Plan. We pivot every time we get a student who is a second-language learner who needs further language support to help him or her be successful in the classroom. We are, and always will be, world-class pivoters.

Now, along comes HB 2662. A bill that requires me, and each and every teacher, to provide lesson plans for the entire year after I've already taught the material. A bill that asks me to be accountable for all of those last minute "changes" that needed to be made during classroom instruction in the midst of a challenging concept. A bill that asks me to document (and cite) everything that was used in my classroom during the past year. My question is, when am I

supposed to do this? Will there be extra days added to the end of the school year so that we can make sure all of this material is uploaded in the correct format? And then, what if someone objects to one of the worksheets I created to help kids grasp material or the videos I quickly grabbed to use as a backup resource while I was teaching a complicated concept? Will I then have to completely redo all of my plans for the next year? And again, when? When do we as teachers have time to do all of this work on top of the already heavy workload that includes building strong relationships with students, writing lesson plans, grading assignments, meeting the standards, attending IEP/504 meetings, keeping up with KESA documentation, planning and executing SEL lessons, and all that is required of professionals in the classroom?

You see, pivoting is the essence of education, and that pivot doesn't always come with a perfectly vetted and cited source; it happens on the fly. It's me creating something in the middle of class because MY students are not where they need to be, and I, as their teacher, recognize that disconnect and fill that gap with the professional knowledge I have acquired through many years of education and professional development courses. Teachers must continue to have the ability to mold and flex their lesson plans. Without this flexibility, education becomes a static structure with no option for individuality or differentiation. In a day and age when we are being told to allow our students' Individual Plans of Study (or IPS) documents to guide our instruction, without the ability to pivot and change, there will be no way to meet these plans. The ability to pivot and flex my lessons and plans around students "in the moment" is critical to me being able to meet the needs of my students each and every day, not the DATA that represents my students, but the actual human beings who enter my room and count on me every single day of the week to provide them with the best instructional opportunities I can.

And again, if I update these resources and plans at the end of the current school year, these are plans that I used this year to teach a unit for this year's students and classes. Will the same plans meet the needs of next year's learners? I have no idea. It is impossible to plan for every scenario ahead of time. I don't know what those learners need until they are sitting in my classroom. I have no idea who is going to need additional support until he or she is struggling and I need to give them extra assistance. I have to be able to pivot, and HB 2662 severely limits my ability to do this.

In my twenty years of teaching, I have had innumerable conversations with parents. Most of those conversations were centered around their child's success in my classroom and how to best provide for their needs. Only a few conversations with parents centered on the actual curriculum being taught in my classroom, and most of those conversations were initiated by me. I have made phone calls home to tell parents that I was going to be discussing a sensitive concept or issue. When I felt these calls were necessary, I made them. I always want parents to be aware of what's going on in my room and to have the opportunity to say, "No" or "Please provide my child with another option" before I teach the material or have the discussions. And when I've made these

calls, parents have been extremely grateful for the open line of communication that I have provided them. They are thankful that I have built a relationship with their child to the point that I know and understand when something might be difficult for their child. Other than these few conversations, I have been thankful for parents who trust my professional judgment. I have been thankful for parents who know that I always have their child's best interests at heart. I have been thankful for the support of parents who also want what's best for their child. You see, in my world, we are a team. I welcome parents' questions and concerns because they do know their child best, but I also want them to trust me as their child's teacher. I want them to understand that I didn't get into education for the money or the prestige; I want them to understand that I am an educator because I love and care about kids, and I will continue to provide each and every child in my classroom with the best possible learning experiences that I can give them.

Tina McIver
Council Grove Jr/Sr High School
11-12 English Language Arts