

Saint Mary's College of California

## Saint Mary's Digital Commons

---

Kalmanovitz School of Education Faculty Works Scholarship, Research, Creative Activities, and  
Community Engagement

---

3-26-2020

### Coping with School Closures as Student Teachers: Self-Compassion, Surrender, and Action

Mary Raygoza

*Saint Mary's College of California*, [mcr13@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:mcr13@stmarys-ca.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.stmarys-ca.edu/school-education-faculty-works>



Part of the [Education Commons](#)

---

#### Repository Citation

Raygoza, Mary. Coping with School Closures as Student Teachers: Self-Compassion, Surrender, and Action (2020). [paper]. <https://digitalcommons.stmarys-ca.edu/school-education-faculty-works/1807>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-Noncommercial 4.0 License](#)

This Paper is brought to you for free and open access by the Scholarship, Research, Creative Activities, and Community Engagement at Saint Mary's Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Kalmanovitz School of Education Faculty Works by an authorized administrator of Saint Mary's Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@stmarys-ca.edu).

## **Coping with School Closures as Student Teachers: Self-Compassion, Surrender, and Action**

*Dr. Mary Raygoza, Assistant Professor of Teacher Education, Saint Mary's College of California*

### ***Self-compassion and validation***

You may wish to engage in a [self-compassion exercise](#). The three components are: mindfulness, shared humanity, and self-compassion. Here are some examples of ways you may adapt each component to this situation, although each part may be personal to you:

*-Mindfulness: This is a time of suffering. I miss my students. I was building meaningful relationships with them, and it was fulfilling and energizing to watch them learn and grow, and to learn and grow myself in this new teacher role. I am grieving the loss of continuing with students as planned.*

*-Shared humanity: Anyone in my shoes would feel this way. My cohort feels this way too. I am not alone. It makes sense I am upset. While other people may be in trying circumstances in this time, it is still valid to feel upset about this.*

*-Self-compassion: May I be kind myself. May I allow myself to miss my students and to grieve our lost time together and the ramifications for students of not being at school and for me not being physically in the classroom at this time. May I give myself the compassion that I need. May I be strong. May I be patient.*

### ***Surrender***

*"Surrender is the most radical way of being I've learned to be in life. It's also the most challenging. In this time of unknowing and chaos, I surrender. As a daughter, granddaughter, auntie, sister and friend, I let go of my impulse to care for everyone I love. As a partner, lover and friend, I let go of any concerns or worries that may create anxiety or stress. As an educator, I let go of my inclination to feel responsible for the education of all children I know and love while schools are closed. As a freedom fighter, I let go of any desire to want to change the current circumstances of our world. Altogether, I let go of fear. I surrender it all to God, my Creator. Because, surrender requires us to remember: it is all bigger than us. To surrender is spiritual maturity and cultural perpetuity at its finest. And so, I gladly surrender."*

*-Marylin Zuniga, teacher at Roses in Concrete Community School in Oakland, CA*

### ***Identify what you can (and cannot) control***

It may be helpful to make a list of what you can control and what you cannot control in this time-- not to say that you should ignore your feelings about what you cannot control; rather, you should indeed name them, acknowledge them, and allow yourself to hold space for those feelings and processing. That said, having the list in front of you may be helpful when you have the desire and capacity to *do something*; you can focus on the things you can do.

Some examples of what you can control may be (and these will vary teacher to teacher, school to school, district to district):

- ★ Sharing [resources](#) with students and their families; find out about and share about things like meals in the community, internet access, filing for unemployment
- ★ Utilizing technology you and the students have access to for communication (e.g. the Remind app, Google classroom)
- ★ [Temperature checks](#) with students, within your professional boundaries, to understand how your students are doing and about their access to learning and technology in this time
- ★ Read [Teaching Tolerance's Trauma-Informed Approach to Teaching Through Coronavirus](#)
- ★ Learn what you can do, what resources and guidance you have access to, and what the district/school policies are for distance learning. E.g. Can you have assignment discussion boards so students may interact in their learning? Can you offer an optional synchronous hour or half hour a week even if instruction is not taking place synchronously?
- ★ *Allow yourself time for this:* Connecting curriculum to what is going on; how can you make distance learning connect with what is going on in students' lives, regionally, globally? How can students read and write about this time, connect this time to history, understand the science of viruses, [the math of exponential growth](#), artistically create something, etc.? Can you get creative in connecting your content area with students' [funds of knowledge](#) from their families? E.g. Assignments that include interviewing a family member about X.
- ★ Thinking about and initial brainstorming for the post-closure future, whether schools open before the end of this school year or not. E.g. if schools do not come back in session this school year, would there be a way to invite students for a classroom reunion to see them together again?
- ★ What you may do that is not related to your student teaching classroom but related to getting you in the classroom for the long-haul; your future students need you:
  - Submitting your EdTPA
  - Applying to teaching jobs
  - Doing your coursework
  - Applying for your credential

*And also, a reminder that you can adjust your timing on any of these; we are here to support your chosen timeline as always and make changes when you identify they are needed!*

Some examples of what you cannot control may be:

- ★ That students and you must shelter in place
- ★ That you will not see your students in-person for quite some time
- ★ That your students may not have some of their basic human needs met because of the school closure (see above, however, regarding resource sharing, which you can do). Please remember that if you learn of harm you are still a mandated reporter.
- ★ That you are not the teacher of record, the school, or the district (and a whole lot of other people in power outside of schools) and therefore do not have control over many decisions right now

- ★ That access to technology and distance learning is highly inequitable (there are things you can do to mediate this in some ways, but this is a *much* larger issue beyond your school and your classroom that will not be fully tackled within this time)

***Be in close contact with your Cooperating Teacher***

You are in this together. They are still your mentor. (Do be patient and understanding, however, because they may be impacted with illness, not having childcare, etc). Be on all communications together with students. What can you brainstorm together? What can you gain from their wisdom regarding this situation, even if they have not been in this situation before as teachers themselves?

***Return to your Teaching as Humanization (education philosophy) statement***

Take some time to return to your “why” for teaching. How does this profound public health crisis bolster or renew your commitment to becoming a teacher? How does this public health crisis connect to and intensify inequities (racism, classism, xenophobia, ableism, etc.), and what roles can schools and classrooms play in pushing back? What can *the collective we* do in the long haul? What are *you* committed to for the long haul?

Email Dr. Mary Raygoza at [mcr13@stmarys-ca.edu](mailto:mcr13@stmarys-ca.edu) to follow-up.