

FEATURE TEACHER

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What is a challenge you have faced teaching in during a pandemic in 2020?

One challenge that I have had is working with my students and parents on completing remote work. Every situation is different, but they all end up with my student either not being able to or not being willing to complete their remote work. Through working with parents and my fellow teachers, I have more students every day able to complete their remote work.

How do you support building a positive and safe online learning environment for your students?

I teach kindness in my classroom, whether that be online or in person. I always encourage my students to treat themselves, other people, and property with respect.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

I was awarded the STEM-Minded Educator Grant from the West Virginia Department of Education. This grant, worth \$1,000, will allow me to complete a STEM unit with my third, fourth, and fifth graders. During the unit, my students will learn about simple machines, motors, and vehicles. They will work through the engineering process to create their own prototypes of a motor-powered vehicle. Each class will compete in the Create-Your-Own Derby and the winners will be given awards. This grant will provide each student with a set of their own materials to build their own vehicles to comply with COVID-19 regulations.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

I give extra credit and verbal praise to students who participate in my online meetings.

Parent Communication... What's working for your families?

On anything that I send home, I add my email and classroom phone number so that parents know how to get in contact with me. I prefer to have a conversation over the phone, but I will use email if a parent emails me first. I often ask, in the email, to set up a phone call. Phone calls are superior to email because tone and intentions are easier to pick up on when you can hear the other person's voice. I also reach out to parents if I notice that a student's grades are slipping or their behavior is out of the ordinary. No matter the topic of the phone call, I like to finish the conversation by complimenting the student and thanking the parent for caring about their child's education.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

I enjoy the smaller class sizes because I get to know students on a deeper, personal level. I am also able to give more one-on-one time to those who need some extra instruction.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

It is necessary to have very open communication with parents and guardians this year because so much of the work that students are doing is at home. When a parent knows they can reach out to me, my students are able to learn more, turn more work in, and receive better grades. I have also found it effective to make in-class lessons hands-on so that they learn the skills more concretely and are able to do their remote work with little assistance.