

FEATURE TEACHER

March 5, 2021

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

It is important to make an online learning environment consistent with how you would your classroom learning environment - safe, engaging, positive, and supportive. I want all students to feel this way whether it's in an online setting or face to face setting. When we are online together, I try to make assignments and activities engaging. I differentiate the activities to meet the needs of the students because I don't want them to feel as if they can't do something. I support them as they learn by scaffolding and guiding instruction as they need me to.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

When I think of a success story, I can't help but think of a student I have who transitioned back to us from an alternative program at the beginning of the year. This student has blossomed while she has been back here! She loves coming to school and is sad when it is a remote day, but she always participates in her small group time with me on those days. Through behavior support she is participating in her general education classroom throughout the day and has made friends with her peers. She has stolen the heart of the staff here as well! Not only has she improved socially and behaviorally, but she has also improved academically by reading sight words, beginning to add, and showing an increase on her i-Ready score! Through consistency, support, positive relationships, and love, all of these successes have made her become the leader she is meant to be.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

When it is time for one of our meetings, I call my students on TEAMS. The majority of them, other than those without the internet, will get on and participate in the instruction. I feel like most of my students enjoy the small group time because it is just a few of them and they can be themselves compared to in a larger group where they may not feel comfortable answering questions or participating out loud. The time they have with me is tailored to their ability and they definitely come out of their shells when we are all together. If I miss one of our times due to another meeting at school, they are quick to ask me why the next time they see me.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

One thing that has been effective in teaching, especially on the remote days is the app, Classkick. We use it consistently in the general education classroom for 3rd grade, and I use it for 2nd and 1st graders I pull out as well. I can make activities for the students to complete and I can see what they are doing live. I am able to differentiate and modify instruction for my students to meet them where they are and make them feel successful. It has really been effective when I am co-teaching remotely with my 3rd grade teachers. We can see each student's slide and if they make a mistake we can address right then and

engage their thinking of what they need to do to fix their mistake. The students love using it as well. One of my 1st grade students is constantly asking for more activities to do.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

One of my goals each year is to build positive relationships with all my students. My main concern beginning this school year was how would I build those relationships with just two days seeing them. I felt like that didn't seem enough time to get to know them and build the relationship with the students that I work with, but boy was I wrong! I realized that it really wasn't how long I was with them, but what I did in that time I was with them that mattered. The air fist bumps when they were excited about accomplishing a goal; listening to the stories they wanted to tell; looking at their cat or stuffed animal when we were on a video call; and just showing them that I cared for them has helped me build the positive relationship with my students, just like (if not more than) any other year, and I have only "seen" them two days a week. I think a big part of this is due to the small groups that we have each day. That has been beneficial, especially during co-teaching to work with not only my students, but the students who may be struggling. This has offered me the opportunity to truly differentiate instruction for those students. Another positive is the relationships I have built with my co-teachers. I feel I have worked closer with my co-teachers than I ever have before. Not only have we tag teamed in person learning, but remote learning as well. We have built positive working relationships that have blossomed into friendships because we have one goal in common: the interests of our students.