

Raleigh County Schools

FEATURE TEACHER

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

The biggest challenge for me is seeing my students for a limited amount of face-to-face classroom instruction. However, with the help of google products, schoology, MS Teams, and other digital platforms; it is helping break the barriers that being apart creates.

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

The first thing I do is stay consistent with communication. If a student knows you will answer a question in a reasonable time, he or she will feel a sense of trust. But when I communicate, I speak their language. It helps the student relate. Secondly, I also communicate my zero tolerance policy for any type of negative remark/reply between students. Also, not allowing a student that type of remark/reply allowed himself or herself. Third, I believe it helps create a positive/safe environment when the students see me staying calm. Yes there will be issues, there always are. But when students see the teacher responding in a calm controlled way in unwanted situations, the students will tend to follow suit. Fourth, I am never afraid to say "I don't know". But I will always add, but we will find out together. This makes teachers seem like real people. Somebody they can trust. Fifth, I follow through with our classroom rules. Consistency is a big part of feeling safe. Sixth, I allow the students to problem solve first. I want them to know they are capable of much more than they realize. Seventh, and lastly, I smile and laugh. I want my students to enjoy their experience. I know that what I'm trying to do is transfer knowledge, but it makes the transfer so much more acceptable when it's done with a smile.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

I am very proud that from the spring to now I have become Google Certified. I wasn't sure I wanted to complete the certification. But afterwards, I was so glad I did. It has definitely helped me create meaningful/interactive lessons for the students.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

I use a few different approaches in hopes of increasing participation. First, I add some entertainment in the online presentations by using Bitmoji characters. Second, I make the work relevant which will build interest. Third, I understand the situation at home can be so vast, so I make my assignments due by 11:59 pm for each day. Not every student is capable of being online at one specific time. Some students are able to get online after their parents are home. This allows them a little more freedom to work when the conditions to work are best at home. Fourth, I utilize what students in today's world most interact with, lessons are presented with escape rooms, youtube videos, all products they deem important and fun. So it might seem a little less like school work and a little more like what they are comfortable doing.

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

The most effective means of communication has been through Schoology's messaging system. It provides a streamline of the communication and with each new conversation you can still view the previous conversations. When needed, I will make phone calls. However, I have found that most responses back are through schoology messaging. I've used email in place of Schoology messaging, the couple times Schoology had some difficulties operating.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

As mentioned before, the combination of using Google products with Schoology. Particularly "Google Forms". I have used Forms to create Escape Rooms, deliver instruction/lessons, present quizzes and tests, and more. I personally love how I can create Sheets from the Forms that will show me analytics for the assignments completed in Forms. The analytics help me to see where instruction needs to re-teach and what topics/concepts students may be struggling with.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

2020 has certainly brought its challenges to the table for teachers. But it has also allowed teachers to demonstrate new-age technology methods that otherwise might have been put on the shelf for a later time. I love the combination of the Google products and Schoology platforms. It allows for a great opportunity to be efficient, communicate with students, no lost assignments, and easy seamless to having missed assignments on absences or other reasons for being away during direct instruction. One last positive for this year is the smaller classes. I love the extra time I have to be able to get one-on-one with students and meet their individual needs.