

FEATURE TEACHER

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

Honestly, I was my own biggest challenge. I am not always super comfortable with new online programs. I felt super overwhelmed, starting the year with all new subjects (having been departmentalized), and a new pile of programs, and a new delivery model. It was a LOT that is for sure. Mix in technology malfunctions and well, I was overwhelmed.

My success came is taking the pieces one at a time, tackling one thing at a time, and giving myself grace. I had to remind myself that I was not going to be an expert ever this year and that was ok. I started by researching and finding resources and materials for new subjects. I then tackled the online plans. First, I learned to use Schoology. I attended the online training then turned to Youtube for help videos. I joined a group using social media with educators across the country who also use Schoology. I started in Schoology with how to send out information then tackled learning how to have students submit work to me using Schoology. I then purchased a Vimeo account using my faculty senate funds, knowing I needed longer videos and wanting to keep them password protected.

I use the online textbook and assessments in our math textbooks, iReady, and Schoology. I am proud of how far I have gotten.

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

I password protect our class videos, and make sure most of our course items are in Schoology so that students are not on the internet searching. I have planned a WebQuest using a prescreened web resource. Mostly I want to make sure that they are enjoying their 5th grade experience. I believe that the best way for the online experience to be positive is to make sure it's not confusing. Practice, Practice, Practice, that has been the key to success.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

Last Spring was just about as disappointing a time as possible for students in terminal grades (5th, 8th, and 12th) because those were supposed to be their big moments, and it all ended. We planned a "Virtual Graduation" for our 5th graders. We included photos of each student holding the same certificate and wearing the same medal that they would have received at our in person graduation. Our class appointed speaker still wrote and delivered a speech. One REALLY special thing we were able to give these students, one that they never would have gotten in a traditional graduation, is a video well wish from every single teacher that taught this group of students. Retired, moved, or still at Bradley every single teacher sent a video memory for this special group of Bradley Tigers. I loved it, and I think that the students did too. We made and posted our Virtual Graduation Video and it has over 1,000 views and was

shared on social media over 100 times. I know it was meaningful to the kids, but maybe even more to their parents. I am so thankful that we were able to give the students this sweet memory virtually.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

I practice and practice at school how to find everything. I also create a calendar that helps the students know what they should do every day in seat class or remote class. They are on the calendar just the same.

Another real success has been remote day math teaching videos. I make videos of each lesson for the next week and post them on Friday so that the students can revisit the lessons we learn live in their seats on remote days as they do a review activity from that lesson.

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

I started the year by speaking to each parent before their student ever entered the school. Starting the year with each family knowing what to expect and having input into what we would do in the new kind of school year really helped. After 3 weeks I sent home a family survey asking about things like the volume of work and course organization. Parents really appreciate being a part of the process.

We have also held a parent Teams meeting with fun at home math fluency practice games.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

I have had great success with novel units. Getting the kids hooked on a great story makes them more excited to read on their remote days.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

It was an adjustment, but I am enjoying increased parent communication. I love how much they are wanting to stay organized with their remote work, and being far more independent. They are also getting so much more confident navigating Schoology.