

FEATURE TEACHER

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

I think it is important to show each other some grace this year. We are all learning and things are changing daily. Mistakes will be made. I encourage parents to keep pushing forward, even when the technology can be overwhelming. We all want to see these students succeed!

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

We still have clear expectations and norms, just as we would in a face to face room. I provide positive feedback and do special activities to reward them. For example, instead of giving a student s sticker for a job well done, I put it on my face. We had one session where Mrs. Bird was totally covered in stickers!

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020/2021?

We normally dress as surgeons and perform "contraction surgery" in class. During our full remote week, I was able to dress as Dr. Bird with my costume, mask, and all! I was able to let the students guide me through the process first. We had a blast and saved a lot of contractions that day! This was helpful in preparing them to do the activity themselves in class the following week.

I recently started a monthly author series via Teams. I didn't think I would get a response from these famous authors, but they were excited to read to my class and do workshops with them for free! Next week, Tara Lazar is reading her twisted fairy tale, "Little Red Gliding Hood" with my class virtually and she is doing a writing workshop with them on how to write a fairy tale. In February, Jane Kurtz is reading her story, "Mister Bones" to us and answering dinosaur questions. She is also writing a new dinosaur book and will take them on a walk through the process. Times are crazy, but exciting things can still happen! Lol. I think authors are more apt to do this since they are stuck at home!

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

I have had to think outside of the box this year! I have been more theatrical, played games, and offered incentives to boost student engagement.

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

I am making myself more available, as I know we have a lot of working parents who need extra support. It is important, now more than ever, to communicate and equip them with as many resources as possible.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

Keep virtual meetings interactive! Students love participating online and there are so many great resources out there. Our learning community may look different, but students need to know it still exists.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

Students are rising to the occasion and showing a new level of responsibility. Teachers are working together to overcome obstacles so all students can be successful! I recently certified as a TIS and I am so thankful for all I learned about blended learning during the certification process. It has prepared me for this year in ways I never imagined!