

FEATURE TEACHER

April 2, 2021

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

One challenge I have faced during this school year has been changing my method of instruction. In a normal year, I like to put the students in groups to work collaboratively together. I also like to do activities where students can get up and move around in the classroom. I have had to change all of my instructional methods this year. I have had to think outside of the box in order to conduct labs. Students can be placed into groups online and work together in their online groups.

Another challenge I have faced is teaching one group in school, while the other group is at home remote learning simultaneously. It has been difficult to keep up with the two groups of students. I have labeled them Group AK and Group LZ to help stay organized.

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

By promoting positive teacher-student relationships and by creating relevant assignments for the course, a positive online learning environment is maintained in my classes. These positive relationships encourage participation. I feel that by providing positive feedback for students helps students stay motivated. Always using the district platforms to communicate with students and to provide feedback helps to maintain student safety.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

I have had several students who have had to quarantine due to family exposures and sicknesses due to Covid-19. Students were still able to keep up with their courses and maintain their grades during this difficult time. Students could meet with me during our Teams Office Hours and go over the work they had missed in their classes. Students can log on to their class and see what they are doing in their classes and remain on task with the class even when they have to be absent from the school day.

Another success story I have had is being able to connect with my coworkers. We have been able to help teach each other new technology, new teaching methods, and share ideas with one another. It has been nice being able to reach out to other educators for advice on what works in their classes and what doesn't.

I also like having the small groups in the classroom. Students are receiving more one-on-one help than ever before. My classes are now at half capacity, which gives me more time to help each student when help is needed. It has been beneficial for me to see where students need reteaching or where they have reached mastery.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

Students are aware that their class continues online. They need to participate in the online activities and meetings in order to be successful throughout the course. Students are also aware that their assignments

in class and online are essential information they need in my class. In class, students are actively engaged in the learning process. This continues in the online setting. When they log onto their Teams Meetings and see that there is a lecture they need to hear, or the activities are gone over together, they want to come back. The meetings are recorded so they can watch these meetings at a later time if there is something that comes up to prevent them from attending every single meeting. Parents and students like the flexibility of still receiving the lesson for the day. Students also receive participation points for attending Teams Meetings.

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

Parents need to be aware of their child's progress. I send out messages to parents through our district platform of Schoology. Many parents like messaging in Schoology or email so they can make contact when they have availability. I also call parents to keep in touch. Parents also like to be informed of positive things going on in the classroom that their student has achieved.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

My methods of teaching have had to adjust during this pandemic. I make sure students are actively engaged in the classroom setting and they are learning while they are in seat during the school day. I also want them to enjoy the class and try to make it as interactive as we can during this time. For example, discussions have allowed students to state their feelings and beliefs on a topic, while allowing them to connect to other students in the class. Furthermore, in instances where students can actively participate in the learning process, we do. Student created their own amendments and voted on them while learning about the amendment process. As they shift to work on their online assignments, they continue to be engaged in their activities. Busy work is something that students do not need during this time. Instead, I have focused on the assignments and activities that are essential for the learning process in my courses. Each day, there is also a daily agenda that lists the objectives for the day. Students know what is expected each day - whether they are in class or remote. This helps them to stay organized and focused.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

A positive this school year has been still being able to connect with students and families. I feel that students are having to interact with me more individually. They connect with me in the classroom setting, but also when they are home remote learning. I also enjoy the smaller class sizes. I feel that students are more comfortable participating in class when there is a smaller group.