

FEATURE TEACHER

December 18, 2020

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Innovation (Pre-K-5), Cranberry-Prosperity Elementary



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

A challenge I have faced in the 2020 school year is the loss of my classroom. As the STEM teacher, and being a specials rotation, I am not able to have the students come to my room and instead I work from a cart and travel to the classrooms. In regards to cleaning and germ safety this also meant that my students needed their own materials and that materials could not be taken from one room to the next. It has certainly been challenging to design lessons where all materials pre-k through 5th are individualized, sanitized, and free from contamination while also traveling throughout the building however it simply required a paradigm shift. I was given the opportunity to live out exactly what I want to teach my students... INNOVATION. I have found myself happy to pack my cart each morning and eager to create individualized materials for my students. It warms my heart to walk into their classroom and learn new things together. It truly required a paradigm shift from the word "challenge" to "opportunity."

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

An expectation I wanted to set with all of our Cranberry students as soon as the school year began was cyber safety. I want my students to feel safe and able to express their creativity in their online assignments but to also feel safe and have the tools they need to report anything that would make them feel uncomfortable.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

For me an overall success I have witnessed from spring until now is TEAMWORK. I have seen parents, teachers, administrators, community members and students all work together to set and reach goals. In our building I am blessed to work with amazing teachers who desire to meet the needs of every single student and the best way to do that is to work together.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

In teaching all elementary age students in our building, I am able to use Seesaw as well as Schoology. A strategy for encouragement that I love to use is simply responding. Doesn't sound like much, but I know when I was a student that I read every word my teacher wrote to me on one of my papers. As my students submit assignments through Seesaw and/or Schoology, I write a comment or record a verbal comment on EVERY SINGLE ONE. This peaks their interest and builds the foundation on trust needed to encourage participation.

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

I love communicating with parents through Seesaw. It is a great way to ask questions, give information or even send a short note of appreciation.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

I have found that an effective teaching strategy in this pandemic is setting clear, consistent expectations with students and modeling those expectations. Teaching in a pandemic is new for teachers, but we must also remember that learning in a pandemic is new to our students and by setting clear and consistent expectations, we are providing them with the information they need to be successful.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

Teaching in 2020 has provided the opportunity for creativity and ingenuity. It has allowed us the time to question what is most important and why. I find myself pushing to make the most of every minute.