

FEATURE TEACHER

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

Technology has been a huge challenge for me teaching in 2020. Technology was never "my thing". However, this year there is no getting by with not jumping into learning as much as you can. I have learned to "LOVE" it and all the additional resources we have to help our students. SEESAW is the platform the younger grades use and I really enjoy the ease of adapting it to assignments.

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

When teaching online I always stay optimistic! When our meetings start we always begin with a review of rules and etiquette. Expectations need to be clear. In the classroom and online we are constantly building a sense of community. Everyone needs to feel invested. They need to feel safe and comfortable while learning together. This is the same as when we are in the school building.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

Going into remote learning was scary, it still can be at times and very frustrating. It's like a Rubik's cube once you think you've got it figured out it falls apart. I would say teaching during the pandemic has been hard. We have literally had to learn to "Just Roll With It." However, reflecting over the past several months I am proud of how myself and my co-workers have come together to work as a TEAM. We have not been defeated, backed down, or given up. We always remember we are here for the kids and have to show up for them no matter what. When we fuss or feel discouraged we are unable to plan from day to day or know what to expect. We ALWAYS remember the smiling faces on the kids and that they need us. It is our calling so we do whatever we have to help them developmentally. So I would say for every educator who works around the clock planning in class assignments, online assignments, TEAMS meetings, training for ourselves, parents and students not to mention those of us who are parents and trying to learn how to balance our jobs and school life. WE DO IT every single day!! While situations haven't been ideal we have persevered."

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

I think online classroom participation is tricky especially for Kindergarten students. We have to "entertain" to maintain their attention. We incorporate fun activities such as guided drawings or fun stories when work is completed. I have offered times to meet and train parents who are having trouble helping their child online. Having open two way communication with families helps them to stay on track with work. Remembering to be flexible with families helps. We have to remember a lot of our families are working full time jobs and trying to teach their children. Speaking from personal experience it can be hard to balance. If families feel comfortable with you they will be willing to learn and stay on track helping their children to complete their work.

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

Two-way communication is imperative to working with parents. I have a lot of success with my email address, phone calls, and TEAMS meetings. I have set up private TEAMS meetings with parents to discuss concerns or offer help they need (no matter how small) to help their child succeed. It's great when students see their teachers and parents working together in their best interest.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

Effective methods for teaching in a pandemic are small groups. It has allowed more time to work with students to help them learn. I feel it has built relationships with them which motivates them to learn and enjoy learning.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

The opportunity to build better relationships with families while teaching in 2020 has been a highlight for me. I feel like this year teachers and parents have had to rely on each other to learn how to best teach our children. We have experienced a lot of ups and downs but we all knew in order to best help our children we had to figure it out together.