

FEATURE TEACHER

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

The biggest challenge I have faced this school year has to be the ever changing expectations that are being required of teachers. This year has presented numerous challenges when trying to teach a class of Kindergarteners. I have had to constantly make adjustments to my style of teaching and learn new teaching platforms all in order to attempt to successfully teach my students. I have learned to "roll with the punches" and maintain a positive attitude all for the sake of my students.

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

To help students have a positive and safe learning environment, I have my settings for Teams set to ensure an outside and unwelcome source cannot crash my meetings. I also encourage students to sit at their desks or tables ready to learn. I always have a lesson prepared along with materials to ensure a smooth lesson. I also try to maintain a positive and enthusiastic attitude to help encourage online participation and learning. In addition, I always preview all Seesaw lessons from the community before posting them to the class.

Do you have a super awesome success story from 2020?

I have had several successes this school year and they all come in the form of students. While this year has been quite challenging, some of my students have persevered and have proven to have learned skills I have taught and beyond. They have participated in countless Teams meetings and Seesaw activities and their lightbulbs are on! While I strive to reach all students, no matter the circumstance, it is wonderful and truly rewarding to see that I am still making an impact and a difference in the lives of students.

What do you do to encourage online classroom participation?

I encourage online classroom participation by discussing Teams meetings and referencing items that have previously been discussed on Teams while in class. I do this to show students what they are missing out on when they choose not to participate. I send constant reminders to parents to encourage them to help their child on Teams meetings and to complete lessons on Seesaw. I also reward students who have completed assignments with charms for bracelets purchased by the school.

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

I mostly communicate with parents through Seesaw. I send weekly newsletters to keep parents and students up to date on the letter of the week, Math skills being taught, the specials schedule and any other odds and ends that parents need to know. I also use email for communication with virtual students and sometimes phone calls are made. Paper communication has essentially been eliminated due to students not being at school on a regular basis.

What methods have been effective in teaching during a pandemic?

Some effective methods I have used during this pandemic is to simply use the standards as a guide for my instruction. I try to keep lessons on Teams meetings enthusiastic and engaging so students feel their time on meetings are worthwhile. Seesaw lessons are chosen carefully so students will be exposed to skills and standards being taught in class. I have also tried to maintain a constant dialogue with parents to help them understand student expectations and skills necessary for students to learn.

Share something positive about teaching in 2020.

Something positive about teaching in 2020 is the fact that I have been able to expand my teaching strategies to include thinking outside of the box in order to meet the needs of my students. I have had to adjust from my normal style of teaching to the new normal, which includes teaching on Teams meetings, posting work to Seesaw, collaborating more regularly with parents, and doubling up on lessons when students are in my classroom. This proves that I, along with thousands of other teachers, have learned just what I am capable of and I am willing to make necessary changes to be an effective teacher for my students.