

Distance Learning Diaries



Here is a week in my distance learning life:

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Fourth Grade Teacher

What did you do today?

We are starting off another week of our online adventures with our daily virtual meet at 10 am. On Mondays, I go over our “Week at a glance” schedule and have a discussion with my students on how to best plan our work. I virtually walk them through my Canvas courses (via “share screen”) and elicit students’ input to see if they are comfortable with the plan. I love that kids are not afraid to say that they don’t understand or don’t know how to access content. I love hearing how students help each other online. Sometimes, I am only a mere listener chuckling at their interactions.

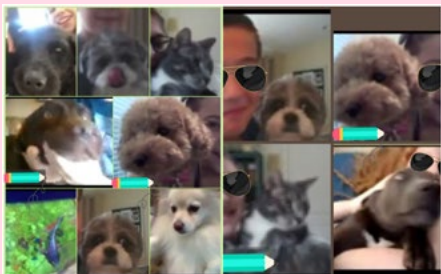
I also had our virtual faculty meeting today. It’s been a while. It was so good to hear and see everyone. I miss interacting with this crew. I am grateful for my principal who is always uplifting and supportive.

What new things did you try today?

Students brought their plastic containers for our Customary/Metric Measurement Digital Museum presentation to complement our current math content. They were excited to share their examples and quiz each other on sizes and their conversions. It was a good excuse to have them get up and move while presenting, as well!

What went well today?

We invited everyone’s pets to our class meeting today. We even had fish participate. I am proud to report that we are on the first-name basis now with everyone’s pet.



What didn’t go well today?

Not being able to sleep really weighs me down. No amount of melatonin can fix it.

I unintentionally missed my Newsela Fellows monthly meeting today! Over the course of this year, we have grown tight. I respect and appreciate their input and advice so missing the meeting was extremely disappointing to me. On a plus side, I managed to upload my monthly Newsela Fellows update which can be viewed here: <https://flipgrid.com/6afe3707>

A big shout out goes to JJ, Brittany and all Newsela Fellows for always being so supportive!

What’s on your mind for tomorrow?

As I am monitoring my students’ digital involvement, what can I do to reach students who seem to struggle with consistency? What could be the underlying reasons preventing them from being consistent? How can I effectively mediate it on my end?

My Wellness Tips

I spent some time photographing my bees using the micro lens. They are mesmerizing. Remember to find the time to do what you love!



What did you do today?

In addition to our morning class meetups, my students also connect daily in the Minecraft Education Edition setting (2:00 pm – 4:00 pm.)

Reconstructing our physical classroom and building our own dream campus in Minecraft has been a cathartic experience for all involved. We meet simultaneously via Zoom during that time, so we have a chance to chat about everything and anything while we build. I was proud to see my students' attention to detail while creating the replica of our classroom. They managed to include our Newsela Hub which is a physical space designated for reading Newsela articles and holding deep discussions that stem from reading various points of view. I am so proud of my students as I watched them become articulate speakers comfortable enough not to conform to the opinions of others. My Newsela Fellows project focuses on interacting with multiple perspectives on the topic and curating content that represents the voices that are not usually present. It paved the way for creating a culture where students are reflective, critical of the sources in front of them, and capable of having a discourse involving opposite points of view.



What new things did you try today?

My students love interactive quizzing platforms such as Kahoot. I have been successfully integrating them in our virtual class meetups. However, I was a little concerned about the synchronous and timed aspect of this platform, and how students who may need more time to process information may end up checking out. I discovered that gimkit.com and Quizziz may be a more inclusive way to go. We tried the former today and students gave me their enthusiastic stamp of approval. In any case, gamification does wonders when it comes to student engagement.

What went well today?

I learned that my 2020 NCTE convention presentation proposal titled Bringing All Perspectives through the Use of Text to Promote Equity and Diversity has been accepted! The proposal is, in fact, my Newsela Fellows project that I have been working on for several months now. I feel humbled and thrilled to be able to share it with other educators!

We are pleased to notify you that we have accepted the following proposal(s):

Bringing All Perspectives through the Use of Text to Promote Equity and Diversity

What didn't go well today?

I spent way too much time online today. I overbooked myself. Too many webinars in a row. I need to get better at scheduling my own virtual PDs. Time is still valuable, even in virtual spaces.

What's on your mind for tomorrow?

How can I do better when it comes to virtual one-on-one or small group interactions without wearing my students out? How am I doing when it comes to differentiating and addressing my students' individual needs?

My Wellness Tips

Nothing revolutionary: read a book or listen to an audio book. There are so many free resources out there including your local library content on Libby.

Also, check out the new and free ALC program for educators and librarians: <https://libro.fm/alc-program>

What did you do today?

One of my students has a 10th birthday today. In anticipation of this special event, I asked all of my students yesterday to bring any musical instrument they could find to today's Zoom meeting. In the absence of real instruments, I encouraged students to bring anything that could potentially create an ear pleasing sound. As you can imagine, my students did not disappoint. I, myself, dusted off my piano for that occasion since it has been a while since I had time to play it. We all played and sang our hearts out. And then, we did it again. I doubt we were in tune but we surely were loud. I could see their faces beaming with smiles. It was a very special moment.

The student's mom later sent me a "Thank you" message via Class Dojo ending with "I cried." ♥

What new things did you try today?

I attended the weekly virtual Scratch meetup, organized by Learning Creating Learning by <https://learn.media.mit.edu/lcl/> where I had a chance to chat with educators from all over the world while creating Scratch projects. I always walk away with new ideas on how to integrate computing and academics. I then participated in a two-hour CS course, after which I joined my district's Minecraft Happy Hour where we shared ideas on how to use the platform to engage students' creativity. So much for not overbooking myself. Practice what you preach!

What went well today?

I taught my students how to create NPCs (Non-Player Characters) in Minecraft, which is a perfect way of including academic content inside the game. NPCs allow players to post content and to link online documents and resources to support that content. For example, in our virtual library, we planted NPCs that display information about Newsela text sets and a link to a padlet where students post their reflections after reading the articles.

Minecraft NPCs/Newsela link: [video](#)

What didn't go well today?

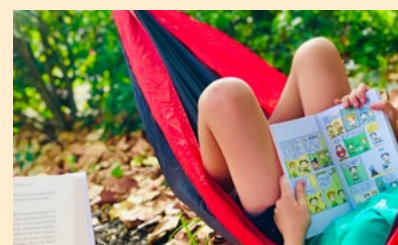
Nothing went wrong today. Really. I love seeing my students. It always brightens my day. I am full of ideas on how to integrate what I have recently learned. I can't wait to share them with my students!

What's on your mind for tomorrow?

What resources do I have at my disposal that would enable me to offer my students a healthy balance of electronic versus non-electronic assignments?

My Wellness Tips

Disconnect yourself from electronic devices once in a while. Find a happy place to reflect, read, or be quiet. Better yet, do it with a like-minded buddy.



What did you do today?

During our morning virtual class meetup, we reflected upon our organizational skills. We have been reading various articles from the Newsela SEL collection [Social-Emotional Learning for Social Distancing](#) which includes topics such as: establishing routines, handling change, keeping in touch with friends, handling anxiety or staying healthy. Students pick and choose content within each Text Set and share the highlights with their peers. We may end up taking it a step farther and continue our discussion via Flipgrid, which would enable students to have time to reflect and ask their peers' questions they still may have about the content shared.

What new things did you try today?

We used Padlet to integrate our reflections about our current novel: *The Mixed Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler*. We added everything we have learned about Michelangelo and the Italian Renaissance from the Newsela Text Set to complement our study. Padlet is a great way to use a variety of media to share what we have learned.

What went well today?

I enjoyed an informative Newsela webinar on Relationships, Routines, Resilience: Promoting SEL Skills from a Distance presented by Turnaround for Children founder and senior science adviser Pamela Cantor. If you did not have a chance to tune in to any of the Newsela webinars yet, consider checking them out. There is something for everyone there!

What didn't go well today?

Providing virtual feedback is way more time consuming than when given during face-to-face interactions. I know how instrumental immediate feedback is, I just have to find a less time consuming way to give it. I will get there, I know I will.

What's on your mind for tomorrow?

I recently mailed letters to all of my students. I included their class pictures and the pictures of them in the astronaut suits which were part of our space study BC19. I also wrote a note to each of them sharing how proud I am of their smooth transition into the remote learning environment. I included several sheets of origami paper which I plan to use in one of our virtual sessions. I wonder if these letters will put a smile on their faces. I wish I could see it for myself.



My Wellness Tips

Take your time to enjoy nature, within the quarantine guidelines of course. South Florida has so much to offer beyond its sandy beaches.

Call me self-gratifying for recommending this, but I genuinely enjoy rereading encouraging notes from my students' parents. I cherish such sentiments. And as a parent, I need to remember to send those to my sons' teachers.

... had such a wonderful day. He so much enjoyed connecting with everyone and receiving the extra help that you provided.

He just said excitedly, "I can't wait until tomorrow." Such a wonderful attitude that you have created for the students towards their school work.

Mrs. Moorman,
Thank you so much for taking the time to write your students letters. Your letter and pictures truly made ... day and mine too. You always go above and beyond and I appreciate that so much. You are very special!

Thanks again.

