

# RESOURCE OF THE WEEK

## Virtual Teaching: Here we come!

Thanks to all who completed the Virtual Practices of Art Educators survey. The experiences and perspectives expressed in the survey results speak to a shared dedication to our profession and the challenges we are currently facing. We recognize that the survey responses were given during a particular moment, and the situation is continuously evolving. While some districts are weeks into their required virtual instruction, other districts are just now beginning to organize efforts that have been, up to this point, teacher-led. Digging deeper into the survey results, this post is meant to help each of us to identify where we are currently in our virtual teaching practice and how we can move forward. We (Katie and Sue) spent some time looking at and discussing the survey results. From this, we've pulled out some common themes of concern:

## Looking back to look forward

It is important to recognize that we all bring different experiences and resources to our current teaching realities. Some of us have had few technological resources available to us in our teaching, while others may come from schools with ample technological tools and training in place prior to the school closures.

While For Another, the teacher's response was ...

“ BUSINESS AS USUAL. ”

One Teacher Responded,

“ I WENT INTO SHOCK; I REALIZED HOW ILLITERATE I FEEL WITH TECHNOLOGY. I DID NOT HAVE A SMART BOARD IN MY ART ROOM SO I JUST DID DEMOS PHYSICALLY IN CLASS... SO THERE, I'M ADMITTING MY FEAR AND WHY IT TOOK ME 3 1/2 WEEKS TO MUSTER UP THE CONFIDENCE TO TACKLE TECHNOLOGY AS A WAY TO TEACH MY KIDDOS. ”

These responses illustrate that we are not all starting from the same place when it comes to the challenge of virtual teaching and learning.

**The first step is to identify where your starting point is without judgment.**

We were all accustomed to the culture and teaching practices at our individual schools, and this new set of circumstances has necessitated a pivotal turn, one that has been a greater shock for some than for others. This is true between districts, and even between schools within a single district as large as Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

# Collective organization vs isolation

Another essential factor to consider is how administrators and school staff have organized since the time of school closures. **While we can't replicate our usual teaching environments, it is possible to provide organized systems of support that improve virtual teaching and learning. To assume that isolated educators can deliver effective teaching practices is not a realistic and sustainable expectation.** The survey responses here reveal the divergent levels of organizational support that teachers are receiving.

## While Some Teachers Shared,

"ONE EMAIL WAS SENT OUT ASKING WHAT WE WERE DOING TO STAY CONNECTED, NO EXPECTATIONS OR REQUESTS WERE GIVEN."

"COMPLETE FREEDOM! (IN OTHER WORDS, NO GUIDANCE.)"

## Others Told a Different Story,

"We (Art, Gym, Music) are to send out a maximum of two assignments per week on Mondays through Google Classroom. Students are expected to complete at least one lesson by Friday per week. We are to provide a video lesson that describes or shows the assignment and to do no traditional grading. The assessments of assignments are based on completion of assignments. I.e: completed or not completed. We are to create assignments that can be completed by the full group, no small group instruction. We can work one-on-one with students that need extra help through Webex Teams video conferencing. We can also provide face to face video conferences during the week with entire classes if we wish. We are expected to be available with office hours 9-11am every week day and our work day is considered to be 8-4. The entire school is using Google Classroom for assignments and some communication with students. Primary communication with families/parents is through Class Dojo. Communication with students and families can also be done by email. We are expected to view and mark assignments completed, create new content, and communicate with students and families throughout the school week."

**If you are one of the many teachers** who are receiving little direction or communication from your administrators and larger school community or find yourself looking for your next steps, **here are some suggestions for choosing a direction and for locating support.**

## Come Equipped With an Equity Lens

Now, more than ever, we need to approach our teaching practice with sensitivity and understanding for the unequal circumstances that exist for our individual students and families. Concern for equity is at the core of what we provide.

At each step in our planning we should consider and continually revise how to reach and support our students and their families.

Their circumstances may include, and not be limited to, such issues as housing insecurity, unstable personal relationships, insufficient access to technology or lack of basic needs.

# Taking First Steps

The following suggestions are about not overlooking the basics-- give time and space for these-- because it will go a long way.

## **Be open and honest, with yourself and others.**

There will be challenges and missteps along the way, so allow yourself the room to make mistakes. Much like the beginning of your teaching career, there is a learning curve for establishing new patterns in your practice.

## **Reach Out.**

Contact a trusted teaching colleague, your school administrators, union liaisons, or other art educators for support. That may sound obvious, but it's important to be free from negative judgments about any needs for support during these difficult times. This is a challenging time for everyone, and that has created an abundance of empathy and sharing amongst colleagues.

## **Consistent Communication.**

Identify your previous established and comfortable patterns for communication with your students and their families. Consider your available options for communication, whether it's email, phone calls, Class Dojo, or something else. Choose a consistent mode and schedule for communication that will feel welcoming and become familiar to students and families.

## **Join Social Media Groups.**

There is an abundance of resources and materials being shared by generous educators during this time. Navigating and filtering through these resources can be overwhelming, so it's okay to be selective and choose what will work best for your students and teaching practice. Resist the temptation to compare yourself and your students to other educators and their students, as all circumstances are unique.

## **Trust Your Intuition.**

Don't forget to listen to yourself during this time. You have formed patterns for creative inspiration in your teaching. Don't let go of those. Additionally, you know the path you have been on in working with your students and what their interests are.

[Visit Lynden Sculpture Garden Virtual Hub for more resources](#)