Autoethnography on teaching during a pandemic

Abstract
The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted and changed teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom and how the pandemic changed personal ideas around online learning. Prior research shows how online learning can be implemented successfully in collegiate classrooms, but it is rare to find research that shows how to successfully implement online learning in a young adolescent classroom. This point of view is from a rural, Iowa middle school standpoint and data was collected through the use of personal journals, emails, and a timeline from March 2020 and May 2020. After the analysis, it was found that converting from an in person to an online format took flexibility, teamwork, patience, and strong student teacher relationships.
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Non- Thesis Creative Component Project for the
Master of Arts in Science Education
University of Northern Iowa

Presented by
Kelsey Ufford
Summer 2021
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

This Paper by: Kelsey Ufford

Entitled: Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

has been approved as meeting the non-thesis requirement for Master of Arts

Date
__________________ Dr. Lyn Countryman, Advisor

Date
__________________ Dr. Dawn Del Carlo, Outside Reader
Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to analyze how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted and changed teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom and how the pandemic changed personal ideas around online learning. Prior research shows how online learning can be implemented successfully in collegiate classrooms, but it is rare to find research that shows how to successfully implement online learning in a young adolescent classroom. This point of view is from a rural, Iowa middle school standpoint and data was collected through the use of personal journals, emails, and a timeline from March 2020 and May 2020. After the analysis, it was found that converting from an in-person to an online format took flexibility, teamwork, patience, and strong student-teacher relationships.
**Table of Contents**

Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................... 5

Chapter 1: Online Learning ............................................................................................... 6  
  Research Gaps .................................................................................................................. 8

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................ 10

Chapter 3: Methodology .................................................................................................. 24

Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results .............................................................................. 28

References ......................................................................................................................... 60

Appendix A: Journals ....................................................................................................... 68

Appendix B: Curriculum .................................................................................................. 88  
  Documents Sharing Ideas ............................................................................................... 88  
  Google Classroom Posts and Documents ...................................................................... 91

Appendix C: District/Building Documents ...................................................................... 111  
  Emails From Staff ......................................................................................................... 111  
  Documents Within Emails ........................................................................................... 127  
  Monday Meeting Notes ................................................................................................. 141
### Lists of Tables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TABLE</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Table 1 District Timeline</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 2 Student Communication vs. Online Learning Ideas</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table 3 Science Ideas by Week</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Acknowledgments

Throughout the writing, research, and analysis of this creative component I have received an abundance of support.

I would first like to thank Dr. Lyn Countryman, my advisor during this process. Multiple times the direction of this paper has changed, and Dr. Countryman remained flexible and was able to push me in the development of my research questions as well as provide me with insightful feedback throughout the process.

I would also like to thank my husband, Seth Bram, for pushing me to finish this paper in a timely manner and allowing me flexibility to work uninterrupted. You provided a console when I became frustrated, an outlet to take mental breaks, and a sympathetic ear.
Chapter 1: Online Learning

“The age is here of distance learning and new forms of e-Learning.” (McCombs & Vakili, 2005). Since the early 2000’s administrators and policymakers have been urging educators to include more electronic learning (e-Learning) opportunities to better prepare students for a complex, ever-changing, global climate (McCombs & Vakili, 2005). Electronic learning, or online learning, are generic terms used to describe educational activities that use an electronic device usually hooked up to the internet (Neyland, 2011). Although using online educational activities has had federal and state support, many schools struggle to implement online education consistently (Liu et al., 2017). Teachers struggle to implement online education because they lack either content or technological knowledge and they are not provided the professional development needed to achieve this knowledge (Liu et al., 2017). Only “44–51 percent of [Iowa] teachers asked students to use technology for collaboration and critical thinking, while 22–27 percent asked students to use technology for communication and creativity.” (Margolin et al., 2019). This data represents how the use of technology in Iowa classrooms is lacking in schools even though in the 2017-2018 school year, 100 percent of Iowa students had access to technology (Tily et al., 2019). When educators look for resources there is little research on strategies to help with teaching in an online learning format for K-12 students (Morgan, 2015). Online education offers benefits, such as flexibility for students to work at their own pace and to complete their work when they can. Disadvantages to asynchronous or synchronous classes is they can hinder student learning as they may decrease motivation and increase absenteeism because it is easier for a student to be
absent from the virtual classroom environment (Morgan, 2015). Students can be absent from a synchronous online learning environment by either not logging into the ‘classroom’ at the given time or by simply logging in, turning off their camera, and stepping away from the computer. Whereas in an in-person classroom there is less of a chance for them to show up late, or simply walking out in the middle of a lesson. Both instances can limit student success.

In December 2019, a severe acute respiratory illness began to rapidly spread from its origin in WuHan City to the rest of the world (Singhal, 2020). The disease caused by this virus became known as COVID-19 (Singhal, 2020). COVID-19 was declared a national pandemic on March 12th, 2020, shutting down schools and businesses across the United States (Viner et al., 2020). Individuals looked at how other countries handled the SARS outbreak in 2003 as guidance for navigating this new infection (Viner et al., 2020). It was concluded social distancing, remaining approximately six feet away from other individuals, and closing schools could decrease transmission by approximately two to four percent (Viner et al., 2020). Iowa school buildings were closed by March 20th, 2020 and students were sent home to begin learning in a virtual environment (Bailey & Schurz, 2020). On March 27th, 2020, based on the governor's proclamation, the Iowa Department of Education released information regarding how to operate schools when the physical buildings were closed during the shutdown. This document provided districts with different continual online learning plans (Hedger, 2020). One plan allowed districts to provide continual learning opportunities that would not be required of students but strongly encouraged. The other plan would require students to complete assignments and
those assignments would impact the students’ grades (Hedger, 2020). While both plans allowed for individual districts to choose which was right for their demographics, most districts chose the voluntary option. During this shutdown, 52% of teachers in the United States had to convert their face-to-face classrooms to a virtual or online learning classroom (Dorn et al., 2020).

**Research Gaps**

Many studies around online learning exist at the collegiate level and examine teacher perceptions, best practices, student engagement, and student achievement. Very little research can be found regarding online learning in the K-12 setting when talking about teacher perceptions, best practices, student engagement, and student achievement. There is little to no research on how K-12 teaching strategies were impacted because of COVID-19 and the result it had on how K-12 teachers perceive online learning.

The purpose of this study is to close the research gap by looking at how converting my in-person curriculum to an online platform and teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic changed my teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom and how my thoughts and ideas around online learning changed as a result. This study focused my own awareness as a teacher by looking at different teaching strategies implemented during the March 2020 to May 2020 school closure and how the pandemic caused my ideas and thoughts around online learning to change. This study used an autoethnographic lens to analyze how the pandemic affected my awareness as a teacher. Analyzing my journal written during my teaching in this time period allowed me to catalog changes in my awareness while teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic as an
eighth-grade science teacher in rural Iowa. This closed the research literature gap since analyzing the effects on learning in my eighth-grade classroom as we transitioned to online education falls within the K-12 research gap. This study looked at qualitative data from journal entries to determine how my teaching strategies changed throughout the conversion to an online method of teaching. In the examination of journal entries, I focused on two main categories to help guide my analysis: 1) decisions made from March to May 2020 showing what I felt were best teaching strategies at the time and 2) personal beliefs surrounding online learning at the middle school level.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

“Without careful implementation, virtual learning alone runs the risk of exacerbating disparities in access to high quality education across different demographic groups and communities.” (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2020 pg. 2). At the end of March 2020, 55.1 million K-12 students within the US were impacted by the closure of both public and private schools (Young & Donovan, 2020). Teachers and administrators used the benefits of the internet to limit students’ time away from the classroom but many struggled moving to completely online instruction (Young & Donovan, 2020). Not only was their concern for how to get the curriculum converted but many were concerned about inequities within the education system affecting some communities more than others. Teachers were forced to find a new way of delivering quality education to all students. Many districts implemented online learning to finish out the 2019-2020 school year. Districts were unsure where to begin since online learning in the K-12 system was unfamiliar territory with little research regarding how to convert in-person classes to an online format. The main goal was to change the district’s curriculum so they could implement quality online instruction for students.

History of Online Learning

Computer and technology advancement in the mid-20th century, along with the willingness of educators to embrace the virtual environment directly impact the online learning done today (Harasim, 2000). Online learning is best defined by Watson, Winograd, and Kalmon (2004) as online instruction and content educational organizations offer, which can include complete cyber school or supplemental instruction
instructors offer to students. While K-12 schools primarily utilize face-to-face education, many began adopting distant learning principles in the early 1980’s. During this time schools utilized distance learning using email or pen pals (Harasim, 2000). Emails and pen pals allowed for professors at universities to expand on student communication and collaboration while not being in an actual classroom. After individuals noticed the success distance learning could offer, the focus started to look at how technology could enhance distance learning opportunities and transform into a completely online learning experience. From there, the first completely online courses, at the collegiate level, was launched and were offered as ‘mini-courses’ through Western Behavioral Sciences Institute (WBSI) (Harasim, 2000).

WBSI experienced many failures during their first years. They discovered online lectures do not facilitate learning and it is only when students participate in discussions and are actively engaged that learning takes place (Harasim, 2000). They also discovered instructors need to look at technology as a way to facilitate collaboration to help build a cognitive understanding rather than only a different way to deliver content (Harasim, 2000). This discovery helped the development of online learning platforms known today.

One cannot discuss the impact online learning has made on the current education system without bringing attention to the charter schools’ implementation of an online classroom. Online learning fit the free-market approach enticing the public to support the charter schools which began popping up all over the country during the 1990’s (Maeroff, 2004). It was charter schools that utilized the online learning approach more than public schools and spearheaded home-schooling via the internet (Maeroff, 2004). Most online
courses within these schools operated in one of the following types of virtual instruction: online-synchronous instruction, online-asynchronous with periodic teacher feedback, asynchronous web-based packages without teacher feedback, or asynchronous book based at-home learning submitting completed work to a teacher (Maeroff, 2004). It was not long after the arrival of charter schools that completely virtual schools began to emerge throughout Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio (Maeroff, 2004). During this time the focus of online learning was to replace traditional face-to-face learning for more efficient use of resources.

As online learning became more available it was used more by higher education than the K-12 public school systems. By 2001 more than 1000 colleges and universities offered some form of online learning and by 2002 individuals could obtain college degrees without stepping foot in the classroom (Maeroff, 2004). Online education continued to grow at the collegiate level and rose from “...9.6 percent total enrollment in 2002 to 32 percent in 2012” (Maeroff, 2004 pg. 224). Online learning in the K-12 setting began expanding dramatically as well. By 2014, it was estimated that seven million students in the K-12 range were enrolled in fully online or partly online courses (Smith & Harvey, 2014). Studies showed online instruction could be just as effective as in-person instruction and students can be successful in either setting (Cavanaugh et al., 2004).

**Benefits of Online Learning**

Before COVID-19 many families were choosing K-12 online learning over the traditional classroom setting because of the benefits it offered. While the benefits are extensive, some of the most notable are flexibility, greater access to high quality teachers,
increased life-long learner skills, increased differentiation of instruction, and increased teacher-student communication.

One of the most notable benefits is that online learning allows flexibility for the student to access their classroom from anywhere at any time (Lips, 2010). This allows students to access the classroom when it is compatible with their learning needs (Gilbert, 2015). Teachers and students have noted the increased focus on the tasks at hand and less focus on issues that arise within a traditional classroom when the student is able to access the classroom freely (Thomson, 2010). When there is no set schedule teachers and students can meet for as long as needed to ensure mastery of the content (Gilbert, 2015).

Virtual classrooms can also give parents more choice as to where they send their children while increasing their assurance their child is getting a high quality education with a highly qualified teacher (Lips, 2010). Students, who are generally overlooked, have access to teachers accredited in their fields thanks to online learning platforms. These teachers foster independent learning and help facilitate life-long learning. In some instances, children would not have access to these high-quality teachers and education without the option of online learning and virtual classrooms (Thomson, 2010).

Students who completed part or all their K-12 experience online have shown increased researching skills, critical thinking skills, and increased computer literacy (Smith & Harvey, 2014). Students who acquire these skills in high school perform better in collegiate courses (Barbour & Reeves, 2009). Students who are enrolled in online learning experiences for their K-12 instruction are more likely to be able to identify their own learning needs and to customize their own learning for success (Thomson, 2010).
This independent learning results from the skills that students gain through an online education and directly correlates with lifelong learning to help students be more successful if future endeavors (Thomson, 2010). These students will be able to compete globally and be successful in the next stages of their lives (Barbour & Reeves, 2009).

Online learning also has the benefit of highly differentiated instruction. Teachers are able to better customize learning experiences for their students (Lips, 2010). This customization is due to the vast multimedia tools that are available online (Thomson, 2010). Lessons are easily designed around a student’s specific learning preferences and interests. This differentiation in instruction is part of the quality education parents look for when choosing a school for their student.

Online learning has the potential to increase communication with students and their families (Lips, 2010). This increased communication fosters development of meaningful teacher-student relationships (Thomson, 2010). This communication piece is important because communication is one of the key factors in determining the success of online learning (Gilbert, 2015).

Online learning fits with many parents' preferences and has many benefits. These benefits made it seem possible for online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic to be successful. Some parents saw this as an opportunity to help their child.

**Inequalities Associated with Online Learning**

While online learning has many benefits, it also has substantial disadvantages. It is important to note that while online learning is becoming more available, the majority of students who choose to enroll in online courses are highly motivated, have an
economic advantage, have more than one parent in the household, are proficient in English, do not have learning disabilities, and are less racially diverse (Wang & Decker, 2014). Public schools are filled with academically, economically, linguistically and/or racially diverse individuals. Online learning is more likely to have a negative impact on students with certain traits such as: less motivation, economically disadvantaged (less access to hardware and a robust internet), less proficiency in English or those with learning disabilities (Smith & Harvey, 2014).

Online learning has been shown to have a negative impact on social development and social emotional learning (Smith & Harvey, 2014). Social development and social emotional learning (SEL) impact a student’s success in the school setting (Manz, 2007). Social and emotional development includes responsible decision making, social awareness, self-awareness, relationship management, and self-management (Manz, 2007). Relationships play an important role in SEL development with teachers being the primary facilitator in those relationships (Manz, 2007). This relationship is much more difficult in the online/virtual setting when compared to a face-to-face setting (Smith & Harvey, 2014).

Online learning can also be more difficult for younger students (Smith & Harvey, 2014). One reason younger students (K-6) struggle with online learning is because their short-term memory and attention capacity are not as developed as secondary students or adults. This means online lessons for K-6 students need to be chunked in manageable sections. These students also fall in the category of Preoperational thought according to Piaget’s developmental stages (Piaget, 1976). These younger students are still building
their experiences, are less capable of using logic, and can seldom mentally represent ideas. These factors make it challenging for teachers to create engaging and meaningful lessons for younger students and require special training and high-quality teachers (Musgrove & Musgrove, 2004). Fully online learning is not ideal for young students.

Online learning is successful only if the students are individually disciplined. This claim is the common opinion of various chief academic advisors and continues to grow in popularity as online learning grows. These academic advisors encompass an array of institutions ranging from nonprofit to private. Eighty-eight percent of all chief academic advisors strongly or very strongly agree that for a student to succeed in an online class they must have self-discipline. It is a concern that online learning may not be appropriate for all students.

**Implementation of Online Learning**

During the coronavirus pandemic, it was imperative for teachers and administrators to take immediate action to mitigate the impact the closures of schools would have on the educational system (OECD, 2020). Converting to a completely online model is not an easy task and many districts were not sure where to begin (Young & Donovan, 2020). Educators knew in order for online education to be meaningful they had to find a way to provoke student interest and increase student engagement, while also being aware of the psychological toll living through a disaster brings on individuals (Dhawan, 2020).

Before schools could determine their actions they had to identify what families needed in terms of online learning, and what families could access in terms of network
and technology (Young & Donovan, 2020). According to the Iowa Department of Education, in their Condition of Education Report, in the 2017-2018 school year, the last year data was available, every student in a public Iowa school had access to some form of technology. However, only about 80% of Iowans had internet access (Slobe, 2020). To help close the gap between the have and have nots in terms of internet access, communities created hotspots where students could gain temporary internet access (Young & Donovan, 2020). Although this provided internet access, there remained a question of the robust bandwidth of this access. Bandwidth affects how efficiently the online platform can be used. For example, if a student does not have enough bandwidth, they will be unable to participate in the virtual classroom discussions or they may be unable to see and interact with their teacher via the web camera feature. Access to robust bandwidth hotspots can also be determined by where a student lives. Higher bandwidths are more common in urban settings rather than in rural settings. A student should not be without an educational opportunity because of financial constraints or where they live. It is the school’s responsibility to ensure everyone has access to quality education (Dhawan, 2020).

Once those resources were available, districts had to look at what online platform they would use for their virtual instruction. While it is understood that technology cannot replace the role of the teacher in the classroom, there are many educational technologies that promote student learning through an online platform (Dhawan, 2020). For these platforms to be successful they needed to offer multiple ways for students to interact with the content provided (Tobin & Behling, 2018). Research shows learning experiences are
magnified, and teachers see overall better outcomes when students are able to interact with peers, instructors, and their teachers (Tobin & Behling, 2018). Many teachers and districts opted for the free education virtual classroom, known as Google Classroom. This tool was released in 2014 as an app because it works well with other Google tools such as Gmail, Drive, Calendar, and other Google Apps (Iftakhar, 2016). The platform also helps teachers with the creation, delivery, collection, and collaboration of assignments for students. Google Classroom is a free cloud-based service, which allows students and teachers to access their materials from anywhere (Iftakhar, 2016). This service also allows students to access certain documents while being offline (Iftakhar, 2016). The ability to access materials while not connected to the internet was one of the greatest perks because it allowed access to materials for students who have spotty or no internet access which is a barrier while taking online courses (Tobin & Behling, 2018).

After school administrators committed to this online platform, they had to make sure teachers were prepared to teach virtually (Young & Donovan, 2020). Districts had to ensure teachers were given ample time to familiarize themselves with the technology and convert their assignments to Google Classroom (Young & Donovan, 2020). Converting assignments from a lecture format to an online format needed more than just cutting and pasting materials meant for face-to-face instruction, to an online platform. “Face-to-face” curriculum that is cut and pasted into an online platform with little alteration limits student success (Tobin & Behling, 2018). To make their courses meaningful, teachers must change their curriculum where students were interacting with multiple different media content, and had to give students as much choice as possible
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

(Tobin & Behling, 2018). These tasks were especially difficult because there was no indication of when schools would go back to an in-person format. This uncertainty meant that teachers were unaware of how much of their curriculum to convert and the expectations of what content needed to be covered. Many teachers struggled with this task due to the continual fluctuation in policies, their own personal trauma, worries about differing student accessibility, and shifting their own mindsets (Trust & Whalen, 2020). Teachers had to find a way to engage students through a virtual classroom and relied heavily on the support of peers as well as social media platforms, administrators, and professional staff for best practice information (Trust & Whalen, 2020). It was through those resources’ teachers were able to shift to online teaching to survive the spring of 2020.

Working on teaching virtually, teachers then had to identify how to help students with special needs (Young & Donovan, 2020). Studies show that special education students enrolled in virtual classrooms tend to score lower on standardized state tests when compared to students with special education services in a face-to-face classroom (Carnahan & Fulton, 2013). Special education students are the students who have an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for school learning. These students make up about 14% of the public-school population nationally and deserve the same quality online education as those students without an IEP (Young & Donovan, 2020). The closure of schools means that children with an IEP lost critical educational resources needed for classroom success (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). While many accommodations for students with an IEP are easily adapted in an online environment, some disabilities are
severe and difficult to accommodate on a virtual platform (Young & Donovan, 2020). Parents with children who have high learning needs often do not feel equipped to help students learn in an at home setting (Masonbrink & Hurley, 2020). It is these students who need strategies developed to ensure their success. One strategy found to particularly benefit students with an IEP, was working with parents and guardians to develop tools that can be used from home with or without technology (Stenhoff et al., 2020). When schools look at the whole student and provide opportunities for all to be successful, virtual schools can work for a majority of students (Stenhoff et al., 2020).

Just as in a face-to-face classroom, students and teachers must establish clear expectations about what virtual learning days should look like (Young & Donovan, 2020). Since teachers and students in a virtual classroom do not have the same social cues as in a face-to-face classroom, it is important there is a clear understanding of what the expectations are and how to interact appropriately (O'Keefe et al., 2020). Clear expectations will help teachers maintain and build on the relationship they have with their students while creating an effective online learning experience. Having unified expectations can help ease student anxiety during an uncertain time (O'Keefe et al., 2020). Clear expectations and the limitation of grey areas increases student engagement as well as the number of assignments students submit. It is also important to include parents, so they are aware of the teacher's expectations. These expectations need to be clear and concise, so parents are able to help the children in the home (Young & Donovan, 2020). These clear expectations ensure student success and limit parent frustrations.
While the steps above indicate how to implement online learning, it is in no way a complete list. This is the result of many struggling and scrambling administrators, politicians, and teachers trying to provide students as much meaningful class time as possible. Each school, state, and district implement virtual learning differently and with a varying amount of success.

**Teaching Strategies for Young Adolescent Science Classroom**

Effective teaching can only be achieved when teachers utilize meaningful and useful teaching strategies. Teaching strategies are the ways in which a teacher represents new ideas to students through a variety of different methods. These methods can include demonstrations, examples, illustrations, analogies, etc. Meaningful teaching strategies are a direct link to student achievement (McDermott & Hand, 2012). Teaching strategies vary considerably depending on the age and prior knowledge of the student as well as the individual teacher.

Since teaching strategies are dependent on a variety of factors, this paper will focus on the strategies that my rural, Iowa school district values the most in an adolescent science classroom. These teaching strategies include building relationships, discovery-based learning opportunities, and information provided in diverse ways.

Building relationships within a school and a classroom is a fundamental part of classroom management and teaching. Building positive relationships decreases student depression and suicide rates while improving academic success (Carlisle, 2011). To successfully build relationships school staff need to make a conscious attempt to build those relationships (Carlisle, 2011). Building relationships can be done through a variety
of methods but the easiest include greeting students at the door, checking in with students, learning about students’ lives, being visible during passing periods, attending student activities outside of school, and getting to know families (Carlisle, 2011). During the 2019-2020 school year, before the school closure in March of 2020, I implemented many of these strategies to build a foundational relationship with my students. This relationship was fundamental in the way I worked through the school closure from March 2020-May 2020.

To increase student scores and the depth of knowledge at the adolescent stage inquiry-based learning (IBL) opportunities are imperative to a science curriculum (Maxwell et al., 2015). IBL focuses less on student memorization of facts and more on the students’ ability to solve complex problems and critical thinking using scientific reasoning. A main part of IBL is the use of scaffolding, the building of new knowledge onto prior knowledge. Using IBL strategies promotes lifelong learning beyond the adolescent years. Specific strategies within IBL include, but are not limited to: peer-peer feedback, student-centered lessons, students’ monitoring of their own learning, self-analysis, development of models, student generated questioning, and discussions (Maxwell et al., 2015). Before the school closure of March 2020 and after the development of solid student-teacher relationships and peer relationships, we began to implement various parts of the IBL strategies within my classroom. The main strategies of focus were peer-peer feedback, self-analysis, development of models, student generated questions, and a variety of discussion formats.
The third strategy imperative to student success is the diverse representation of materials. Using diverse representation of materials not only allows students to have a better understanding of the science material but also prepares them for their future (Nixon et al., 2015). Often scientists beyond the classroom use multiple mediums to represent their findings therefore it is imperative teachers support students to do the same (Nixon et al., 2015). Using multi modes also provides students a greater chance of retrieving information as well as applying the information cross curricularly (McDermott & Hand, 2012). This diversification can be brought to lessons through a variety of means (McDermott & Hand, 2012). Before the March 2020 school closure common forms of diversified information within my rural, Iowa, science classroom was by utilizing modeling, videos, demonstrations, scientific texts, interviews, illustrations, and animations. They were also able to represent their learning through diversified ways. This included but was not limited to developing models, giving presentations, taking assessments, development of games, etc. All these things allowed students to diversify how information was presented as well as how they presented their learning. While these strategies are important in a face-to-face classroom, it was important to utilize these strategies in an online environment to help ensure the success of the students.
Chapter 3: Methodology

There are many papers about best practices within a classroom, but few recognize the struggle of converting curriculum to an online platform in the middle of a pandemic. As described in the literature review, few studies looked at teacher perception while teaching virtually, and even less describe how teaching during a pandemic changed one’s outlook on a classroom.

During this study, I looked at how teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 to May 2020 altered my teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom and how my own thoughts and ideas around online learning changed because of the COVID-19 pandemic. These research questions are defined below:

1. How did teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year impact and change my teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom?
2. How did my ideas around online learning change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year?

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework behind this study is social constructivist theory with an emphasis on autoethnography. Social constructivism, described best by Vygotsky (Kalina & Powell, 2009), sees the learner as actively building knowledge. Prior knowledge plays a key role in the construction of new ideas in Vygotsky’s theory of learning. He believed the world is always changing and shaping individuals, and individuals are always changing the world (Hausfather, 1996). It is because of this that it is imperative to look at
the research questions through a social constructivist lens. Social constructivism also takes into consideration the culture and how it plays a key role in shaping individuals (Liu & Chen, 2010). It is important to use social constructivism as the lens for this study because social constructivism looks not only at how individuals actively construct their own knowledge based on their own experiences, but also how society and groups of individuals aid in that construction of knowledge. Not only did I use my prior knowledge and perceptions about best practices and teaching to help aid in my personal and students’ experiences, but my perceptions also changed over time depending on the interactions between myself, other teachers, and other members of society. Their thoughts and beliefs that surrounded the pandemic influenced not only the immediate action I took, but also the way I perceive my classroom now. This social constructivism outlook will allow for me to critically analyze how the pandemic and how other’s thoughts and opinions shaped my current reality.

Autoethnography is the specific methodological framework that guided this study. This analysis allows the researcher to be put into the middle of the study. Autoethnography is meant to look at how culture connects with oneself, with the social, and with context in which the research is done (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). Taking this approach to answer the research questions allowed me to be self-critical and to pay close attention to how the social and cultural influences of the pandemic impacted my teaching styles and practices. The social constructivist side of autoethnography allows me to examine how relationships, prior knowledge, and new learnings impacted my current teaching style and how it changed while teaching through COVID-19 (McIlveen, 2008).
An autoethnography framework fostered the development of my own narrative that used authentic experiences to close the gap within the research (McIlveen, 2008). While there are many different types of autoethnographies this study focused on the Reflective form of autoethnography. This form of autoethnography requires that the author focus on how the researcher changes as a result of the experiences that they have been through (Ngunjiri et al., 2010). This form of autoethnography allowed me to analyze and detail how teaching through a pandemic changed my thoughts and beliefs.

**Data Collection**

To answer both research questions I closely examined decisions I made and how the social/cultural context of the time impacted those decisions. Both research questions were answered by collecting information from the same sources. After those sources were gathered, I looked at them and highlighted key parts that answered my research questions.

The first set of data collected were journals kept from March 2020-May 2020. In these journals I recorded my experiences as a middle level science teacher in rural Iowa trying to convert to an online curriculum. These journals documented the decisions I made and how the social context impacted those decisions. These journals had four specific color unique codes that looked for a variety of phrases that answer both research questions and included: green for district timeline, yellow for the teaching strategies, purple for online learning ideas, and blue for student communication. If a phrase fell under two or more codes, the highlight color would be red. These codes and journals can be seen in Appendix A.
Additionally, I analyzed the timeline of events occurring from March 2020 to May 2020 (Table 1). This timeline documented how quickly things changed within the district and how what was happening impacted the decisions made with the science department that involved my students. This timeline shows not only what happened as a district but shows how our science departments' ideas progressed over time.

To see how thoughts of our science department changed over time and how those thoughts impacted our students, I analyzed journal entries discussing science department ideas as well journal entries that displayed student communication regarding the science departments decisions. Examination of this data provided insight into how the ideas of the science department changed throughout this time (Table 2). This week-by-week comparison allowed me to analyze the complexity of the ideas as well as what the students completed. This data will be displayed in table format (Table 3) while specific documents will be displayed in Appendix B.

Finally, all individual emails I sent and received from March 2020 to May 2020 were collected for analysis. These emails show different student interactions, peer interactions, and district interactions. Gathering emails allowed me to connect my personal experiences to the cultural climate, and to the social context and can be seen in Appendix C.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Results

COVID-19 was something we as educators and me personally could have never prepared for. It taught me things about myself and my teaching that have changed me forever. By looking through journals, emails, and peer conversations I was able to successfully answer the research questions provided earlier within this paper.

Data Analyzed

To answer the first research question, “How did teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year impact and change my teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom?” I examined my journals, and the timeline by highlighting key phrases representing one or more of the following teaching strategies, building relationships, differentiation of instructions, or IBL. I then compared that to what was happening within the district that could have had an impact on those strategies. Highlighting teaching strategies identified how strategies changed over time, while looking at the district timeline identified the social context within the district that changed those strategies.

I first focused on highlighted phrases around teaching strategies relating to building relationships, IBL, or diverse representation of materials. These teaching strategies were the main focus because they have been shown to improve student’s academic successes, according to my literature review. Since these strategies improve student success, I chose to see how these different strategies changed over time. Then I looked at what was highlighted in my journals and only focused on the teaching strategies
and how they changed through the 11 journal entries. I also looked at the district timeline (Table 1) to determine how the district timeline impacted my teaching strategies.

Teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year impacted and changed my teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom by solidifying what I believe to be the most important teaching strategy, building relationships. Out of 23 mentions related to teaching strategies over 11 weeks, 7 were strictly about building or maintaining relationships. Several options or phrases fell under this classification of coding. During the first read through of my journals I would highlight a sentence where I specifically mention relationships. An example of this is, “I start by completing a bell ringer with the students. This bell ringer is a would you rather question that provides students a low stakes opportunity to share their ideas. It allows me to get to know my students and allows them to get to know me. This matches my beliefs for how important I think relationships are” (Appendix A, Journal 4.12-4.17)

During my second read through I highlighted phrases that mentioned building or maintaining relationships. For example, “I try to make things as ‘normal’ as possible by including different things that I have been doing to keep myself busy and by a would you rather question to start the google meet” (Appendix A, Journal 4.18-4.24). My third read though I highlighted a phrase or phrases on relationships coming from the district. Phrases such as, “We end the meeting with the reminder to focus on building and maintaining the relationships we have established throughout the year” exemplify this category (Appendix A, Journal 4.26-5.1).
The next teaching strategy that appeared the most was using inquiry-based learning. This strategy was important to code for because it improves student attitude, achievement, and engagement (Maxwell et al., 2015). For a phrase to fall under this code I was looking for keywords such as asking questions, researching, modeling, critical thinking, prior knowledge. Six out of the 23 teaching strategies highlighted were around using inquiry-based skills previously acquired. An example of this can be seen in the following phrase, “We came to the conclusion to focus on asking questions for the first week using a question matrix that I developed earlier in the year. The second week we decided to look at analyzing and interpreting data. Students will be looking at reliable resources to try and find an answer to their questions.” (Appendix A, Journal 3.28-4.2). Under that same entry another example can be read, “…students can use their critical thinking skills.” (Appendix A, Journal 3.28-4.2). It is important that we used skills students were already familiar with as a way to keep them engaged and interested without it being too challenging. These strategies were implemented when fewer changes were occurring and when students had an idea of how online school would work.

The other three of the 23 mentions of teaching strategies were based around differentiating instruction. This code is imperative to student success and their ability to understand science (Nixon et al., 2015). While reading through journals I highlighted different ways I allowed for either students to show differentiation in the way they presented their learning or in the ways I provided information in multiple modalities. There are few examples of these strategies listed in the 11 journal entries. One example reads, “I uploaded a video describing the task…” (Appendix A, Journal 4.12-4.17.) This
received a highlight because not only did I upload videos describing that week's task, but I also gave them written directions on a PowerPoint presentation and on a word document. These different formats allow for the directions to be read to them as another way of presenting information in different ways.

Once the journals were analyzed I began to focus on my district's timeline (Table 1). The district timeline was analyzed by again highlighting key components that impacted my classroom. These key components consisted of the district's decisions, how they changed over time, and how my assignments changed over time. For each occurrence the color gradually became darker to make the analysis and comparison to journals easier.

From March 2020-May 2020 most of the district decisions were happening at the beginning of the school closure. Of the 16 district codes 12 of district emails and changes were made before the first science assignment was posted on google classroom. This means most teaching strategies were only utilized after the districts made their decisions.

The final analysis of the district timeline was based around the actual assignments posted to my students. This color can be seen in orange and progressively becomes darker as more assignments were posted. This allowed me to identify how assignments changed over the course of the school closure and the types of assignments being posted. Ten times during the school closure I posted assignments and it was not until after most of the district decisions were made and after several meetings with peers.

To answer the second research question of, “How did my ideas around online learning change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school
year? I examined my journals and the timeline by highlighting key phrases representing student communication or ideas for online learning. I then compared that to what was happening between the science department that could have impacted those ideas and the communication. Highlighting for idea changes and communication allowed me to document and identify how ideas changed over time, while looking at the peer communication within the District Timeline (Table 1) I was able to connect the social context to what changed those ideas.

I first read journals while highlighting phrases or ideas I had for online learning. This allowed me to first identify what my ideas were so then I could see how they changed over time. The key phrases I looked for included action words involving students. An example reads, “...decided to challenge students to build something as tall as they can.” (Appendix A, Journal 4.4-4.10). I also highlighted statements that involved discussing ideas with my peers. An example of this reads, “Our last task is to determine what our last assignment will be for our students. Since we are a science department and as of now we all don’t have the same grade, it needs to be something that is appropriate for both seventh and eighth grade. One member in our PLC team shares a slide show that has zoomed up images and then the students would have to guess what they are.” (Appendix A, Journal 5.10-5.15). Over the 11 journal entries, 22 ideas for online learning were highlighted.

I then looked at the District Timeline (Table 1) and focused on peer communication. This information can be seen in the table as highlighted in green. The more our ideas progressed the darker the green color became. Fourteen main events
happened regarding communication with peers from March 2020 to May 2020. The majority of this communication happened after the district made their decisions but continued well after the majority of the district changes happened. The decisions made also happened as assignments were being posted and shared with students. A breakdown of student and teacher communication can be seen in Table 2. This is imperative because I was able to compare how often student and peer communication occurred to better answer the second research question.

I then read through my journals again, this time highlighting any time I mentioned student communication. While reading my journals I looked for phrases where I mentioned a student having a question or a type of interaction between them. An example of this states, “students began to email me questions about their assignments.” (Appendix A, Journal 4.18-4.24). Throughout the 11 journals I mentioned student communication 10 times. Student communication has an impact because my peers and I used how our students were doing as gauges of where to go next. In Table 2 under Journal 4.18-4.24 that when the student communication increased so did the ideas discussed between the science department. Another example of using student questions to gauge where the science department went next can be seen in Journal 4.12-4.17. During this week students communicated questions with me twice and twice the science department discussed different ideas for those students.

During the first few weeks of remote teaching, there are several ideas regarding the different ideas the science department had for our students (Table 3). Seventeen different ideas and resources students could use were mentioned and documents. Of those
activities only two of them involved the student being actively engaged. Most of these resources had students using their technology and watching videos, going through simulations, or completing online readings. It was not until Week 4 there was a clear distinction of the direction we were going. Within Week 4 we were more specific on the tasks the students would complete and were more mindful of the amount of time students would be spending actively engaged.

Our decision to make the work more concise and independent came after communication between the district stating we could not teach any new information. This promoted the idea that focusing on individual phenomena would promote an engaging experience while preparing them for their next steps. In the end we made the choice to have students work through engineering and design standards which is something all students can do on their own. It was apparent that students are able to do parts of those standards on their own, with minimal guidance when looking at the amount of work completed each week. This conclusion can be seen when looking at the student communication occurrences within the journals kept (Table 2).
## Table 1

### District Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 13th, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent says we will remain in school after break until he gets the recommendation to do otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal emailed staff checking in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 15th, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent informing staff of Kym Reynolds recommendation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19th, 2020</td>
<td>Curriculum Director said to not share out resources to students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 19th, 2020</td>
<td>Curriculum Director informs district staff to not report to work on Monday, March 23rd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent confirms that we will not be attending school until told otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23rd, 2020</td>
<td>Administrators have a meeting to discuss our next steps as a school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23rd, 2020</td>
<td>Letter goes out to parents to inform them on how to gather materials for their students as well as tips to help their students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 23rd, 2020</td>
<td>Teacher letter providing information from the district March 24th, 2020-First Iowa death due to COVID-19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 24th, 2020</td>
<td>Informed by Science Instruction Coach that we will have a meeting on Wednesday to brainstorm resources for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 25th, 2020</td>
<td>Meeting with middle school science department to explore science resources and to give our recommended resources to our curriculum director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 26th, 2020</td>
<td>Staff informed that students will have access to meals during school closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 27th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal decides on Spirit Week for staff and students during the next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 27th, 2020</td>
<td>Teachers given work expectations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 1 (continued)**

*District Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>March 30th, 2020</td>
<td>Curriculum Director shares resources that departments have developed with parents and guardians</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31st, 2020</td>
<td>Curriculum Director sends a teacher letter that has recommended structure for students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 31st, 2020</td>
<td>First staff meeting as a whole building via Google Meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2nd, 2020</td>
<td>First confirmed COVID-19 case in our school districts county</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2nd, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent informs staff that the school will be closed through the remainder of April</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2nd, 2020</td>
<td>Our middle school science department meets to discuss options for students during the school closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2nd, 2020</td>
<td>Internet Information sent out to parents and guardians of students within the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 3rd, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent emails parents to reassure that they are working to identify high school credit issues with the school closure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6th, 2020</td>
<td>Work expectations and pay guidelines shared with staff from the superintendent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 6th, 2020</td>
<td>First science assignment posted via google classroom to see which students are checking their emails/classroom and who may or may not have internet access</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7th, 2020</td>
<td>Middle school staff meeting to discuss guidelines and expectations next week for staff and classes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8th, 2020</td>
<td>Analyzed data and sent email to students who did not respond to google classroom assignment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8th, 2020</td>
<td>Invitation to join a weekly staff google meet starting Monday April 13th, 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 8th, 2020</td>
<td>Special education teachers develop individualized learning boards for students on their roster</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 9th, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent and middle school principal’s emails are hacked</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9th, 2020</td>
<td>Letter sent to middle school families informing them of the class schedule and directions explaining how to join classes via google meets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 9th, 2020</td>
<td>Curriculum director sent a letter to families within the district to describe student expectations next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 12th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal informs staff to allow students to fix their grade from assignments prior to spring break.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13th, 2020</td>
<td>All middle school staff meeting informing staff of procedure to get materials from the classroom and google meet expectations that are to start this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13th, 2020</td>
<td>Middle school science department meeting to discuss the assignments and what to post to students on Wednesday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13th, 2020</td>
<td>Posted directions on google classroom that informed students of the expectations during my google meet as well as when/how to access the virtual classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15th, 2020</td>
<td>First science assignment asking students to use question matrix to develop questions posted via google classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 15th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17th, 2020</td>
<td>First science assignment due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal sends an email informing staff of what the topics of the Monday meeting will entail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 17th, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent informs staff that we will not be reopening this school year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Staff meeting that informed middle school staff that we will not be posting trimester three grades, when our last day of school is</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 (continued)

*District Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Meeting with the science department to discuss next steps in our project as well as our scope and sequence for next year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Sent an email to students who did not turn in their assignment from last week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20th, 2020</td>
<td>First student realization that the work they are doing will not impact their grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 22nd, 2020</td>
<td>Obtaining and Evaluating science assignment posted on google classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 22nd, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23rd, 2020</td>
<td>First individuals die in our school district’s county due to COVID-19.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24th, 2020</td>
<td>I posted a clarification video on google classroom and the students’ assignment was due</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 24th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal sent our suggestions and reminders for google meets and content delivery for next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27th, 2020</td>
<td>Middle school staff meeting discussing the plan for students to clean out their lockers and the need for focusing on relationships during this time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 27th, 2020</td>
<td>Science department meeting discussing attendance, turn in rate, and where to go next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 29th, 2020</td>
<td>Diving into Research science assignment posted on google classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 29th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1st, 2020</td>
<td>Posted clarification directions for the science assignment via google classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 1st, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 1 (continued)

**District Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 1st, 2020</td>
<td>Principal cancels Monday meeting for next week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 4th, 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>Middle school science department meeting discussing student needs and tasks for upcoming week.</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 4th, 2020</td>
<td>Diving into Research Part 2 science assignment posted on google classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 6th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal emails update to parents regarding locker clean out information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 8th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11th, 2020</td>
<td>Middle school staff meeting discussing the last week of school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 11th, 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>Middle school science department meeting planning out the rest of the school year and preparing for next year</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 11th, 2020</td>
<td>Created a schedule with cross curricular teams on how our students last day will look like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 13th, 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Final Answer science assignment posted on google classroom</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 15th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 18th, 2020</td>
<td>Middle school staff meeting discussing Return to Learn plan and discuss expectations of staff’s last day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Kym Reynolds gives schools permission to resume activities with appropriate precautions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 20th, 2020</strong></td>
<td><strong>Zoomed in Photo Challenge assignment posted on google classroom for students</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 1 (continued)

*District Timeline*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>What Happened</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 20th, 2020</td>
<td>Principal shares out plan to have 8th grade students turn in their Chromebook</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 22nd, 2020</td>
<td>Google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 25th, 2020</td>
<td>No school or google meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 26th, 2020</strong></td>
<td>Cross curricular team discussion on best way to involve students in the last say google meets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 26th, 2020</td>
<td>Middle school staff meeting discussing next year’s three possible schedules and clear expectations for staff during our professional development day.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 27th, 2020</strong></td>
<td>Posted answers of Zoomed in Photo Challenge, my science assignment for my students on google classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 27th, 2020</td>
<td>Superintendent sent email wrapping up the school year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 27th, 2020</td>
<td>Last google meet with students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>May 28th, 2020</strong></td>
<td>Building instructional coach emailed out a plan for our professional development on May 29th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29th, 2020</td>
<td>Met in person with the middle school science department to determine which units for seventh and eighth grade we would be starting with during the 2020-2021 school year as well as ordered materials for future labs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 29th, 2020</td>
<td>Last day of School</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2

*Student Communication vs. Online Learning Ideas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Weeks</th>
<th>Code: Ideas for Online Learning</th>
<th>Code: Student Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.15.2020-3.22.2020</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.22.2020-3.27.2020</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.29.2020-4.03.2020</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.04.2020-4.10.2020</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.12.2020-4.17.2020</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.18.2020-4.24.2020</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.26.2020-5.01.2020</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 (continued)

*Student Communication vs. Online Learning Ideas*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Journal Weeks</th>
<th>Code: Ideas for Online Learning</th>
<th>Code: Student Communication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5.04.2020-5.08.2020</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.10.2020-5.15.2020</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.17.2020-5.22.2020</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.25.2020-5.29.2020</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 1</td>
<td>Scholastic ScienceFlix</td>
<td>All sorts of science topics to read, watch, explore - “Experiments” “Careers in Science” “Science News” are the major headings. Experiments look like they use simple materials that people might have on-hand. Under “Resources and Tools” there are lesson plans, quizzes, projects, video, other media, etc. You can share materials through Google Classroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open SciEd</td>
<td>Simulations Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mosa Mack</td>
<td>Log in account needed - Similar to Scholastic ScienceFlix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

*Science Ideas by Week*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stem Scopes</td>
<td>Too much to login and use.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Phet Simulations</td>
<td>Too much to choose from and not a great benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 2</td>
<td>BrainPop</td>
<td>Videos/quizzes/additional info about topics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

*Science Ideas by Week*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Spangler Effect</td>
<td>Science experiments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Exploratorium</td>
<td>“The Exploratorium isn't just a museum; it's an ongoing exploration of science, art, and human perception. Explore our vast collection of online experiences to feed your curiosity and education resources supporting online teaching and learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>PBSLearningmedia</td>
<td>Videos, audio, images all accessible without login. Simulations/interactives need login.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

*Science Ideas by Week*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SciShow</td>
<td>YouTube channel---SciShow explores the unexpected. Seven days a week, Hank Green, Michael Aranda, and Olivia Gordon delve into the scientific subjects that defy our expectations and make us even more curious!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AsapScience</td>
<td>YouTube channel---Making science make sense.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ScienceBob</td>
<td>YouTube channel---Watch videos of Science Bob's science experiments in action. Learn how to make slime, erupting volcanoes, electromagnets and more</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 3 (continued)**

*Science Ideas by Week*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BestOfScience</td>
<td>YouTube channel---variety of topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 3</td>
<td>Unplugged Idea (Mandie Sanderman)</td>
<td>Science junk drawer sorting challenge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>IXL</td>
<td>There is currently a free trial of science content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Table 3 (continued)**

*Science Ideas by Week*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AEA At Home Science</td>
<td>Mandie Sanderman’s Blog of science ideas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 4</td>
<td>Make a Tower FlipGrid</td>
<td>They need to make a tower and either take a picture or a video so they can practice using their chromebooks to upload videos and pictures to google classroom. Allows us to identify which students are participating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 5</td>
<td>NGSS Phenomena Ask a Question</td>
<td>Pick a topic they would like to know more about. If they need help, they are directed to use the NGSS Phenomena webpage. Their question must fall within 5 points on the question matrix</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 (continued)

*Science Ideas by Week*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Week 6</td>
<td>Obtaining and Evaluation Information</td>
<td>They develop two question that will help them answer their phenomena question as well as identifying 4 reliable resources that score 15 points or higher on the rubric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 7</td>
<td>Diving into Research Part 1</td>
<td>Either answer question one with the different facts they have learned, or they look at two websites from last week and pull four facts from each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 8</td>
<td>Diving into Research Part 2</td>
<td>Either answer question two with the different facts they have learned, or they look at two websites from last week and pull four facts from each.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>Descriptions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 9</td>
<td>The Final Answer</td>
<td>Answer their phenomena question in Claim, Evidence, Reasoning format.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 10</td>
<td>Up Close Images</td>
<td>Fill out google form guessing what close-up images are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Week 11</td>
<td>Up Close Images</td>
<td>They receive close-up image answers and fill out evaluation forms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Results

Teaching through the COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year impacted and changed my teaching strategies in a young adolescent science classroom by bringing to light how important IBL, building relationships, and differentiation of instruction is. The impact the district and my peers had on my decisions were the reason those strategies were successfully implemented or not. The district provided guidelines through which I was expected to follow, and as a department we discussed those guidelines while implementing appropriate teaching strategies. This analysis brought to light how important it is to differentiate the way we communicate and explain things to students.

As a science department, we did not do a very good job of differentiating the instruction during the closure of March 2020- May 2020. Once we found a routine we liked, we stuck with it and did not offer many variabilities. A usual routine was presenting a slideshow in a google meet accompanied with a google doc describing the directions. The introduction dates were on Wednesdays and the due days were always on Fridays. Students only were able to submit a google doc or a google form describing their learning. Showing students information in new and unique ways is one teaching strategy my school finds very important and this analysis made clear that needs to be focused on in years to come. Differentiation needs to be highlighted in the following years because it allows for a deeper understanding as well as better prepares them for their future (Nixon et al., 2015). Examples of offering differentiation in instruction are
including diagrams, models, pictures, charts, mathematical equations, tables and different
texts (McDermott & Hand, 2013). Online teaching should not negatively impact students’
ability to receive information in multiple different ways.

My ideas around online learning changed from having the students watch videos
and online simulations to actively discovering, exploring, and researching because of the
COVID-19 pandemic during the 2019-2020 school year. My ideas transitioned from
sitting and completing simulations or designated readings to exploring, researching, and
discovering one’s own interests. During the first month most of the closure resources
mainly included online simulations, reading articles, and YouTube videos. These
resources do not take a lot of preparation from the teacher perceptive but are repetitive
week after week for the students. At the start of the school closure, I thought that students
should all be completing the same web-based science interactive. Our initial goals were a
one size fits all approach. These ideas can be seen in weeks 1-3 in Table 3. This proved to
be ineffective since self-paced classrooms are beneficial for some students but those with
individualized learning plans are at a disadvantage (Smith & Harvey, 2014).

Over time as a science department, we were able to create a cohesive working
unit that allowed students to explore their own interests at their own level. We were able
to lightly guide them in a direction that was age appropriate as well as provide support
that would hopefully help them in their next years. It allowed them flexibility to focus on
different phenomena while providing us, the teachers, a chance to provide feedback to the
students.
After going through the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become clear that content, though important, is not the most important aspect of a middle school science classroom. It is more important to engage their curiosity and build or maintain relationships that will help students be successful for what their future holds. Building and maintaining relationships at the middle school level can drastically change the amount of success in the classroom (Carlisle, 2011). The relationship between my students and I proved to be monumentally important when trying to identify the path that needed to be taken.
Chapter 5: Conclusion and Reflection

While I hope that another pandemic is not in the foreseeable future, I am more prepared for that or anything else that gets thrown my way as an educator. While my team and I did several great things, there were also things that I would change if I could do it all again. I should have spent more time focusing on communicating with students or focusing on different ways to display information so all students could be successful. Different modes of representation is an important guideline seen throughout the literature.

The foundations I had in place from August 2019-March 2020 provided me the support I needed to make the school closure meaningful. It is those foundations I continued to implement during the 2020-2021 school year. This will help my students be as adaptable as possible in the future.

The foundation I recommend is building positive relationships. This focus on building relationships with students is one that my school and myself value. It is fundamental to build positive relationships to make online learning meaningful and to make the transition from stable to unstable environments easier. One way I maintained the relationships I built during the school closure was by keeping things light in the beginning. I would have students log into their google meets and answer a “would you rather question” in the chat box on google meet. This is a low stakes way to have students volunteer, build relationships, and to become more comfortable with the ‘new norm’.

My second recommendation is to take care of oneself. There were many times, as can be seen throughout my journals, where I would be mentally struggling with the news that the day brought, and I would let it consume me. Eventually, I found different ways I
was able to mentally reset myself. I now know myself better and am more prepared if we are ever put in that situation again. When I was able to work through my own discomforts, I had a relationship strong enough with my students where I could be honest and help them work through their own discomforts. This honesty is something I have brought to my current classrooms and is built on solid relationships with students. I recommend being open with students, and allowing them to see how we, as mentors, process our own emotions and traumas to help them process what they bring to the table. This honesty helps both teachers and students be more successful.

My last and final recommendation would be to show students' flexibility and willingness to try new things. During March 2020-May 2020 I said so many times to my students that I had no clue what I was doing, and we are going to learn together. This flexibility is also something that I brought and will continue to bring into future years of teaching. Show students that we as educators are flexible and may not have everything figured out but are willing to try new things. This idea of admitting when I don’t know things allowed students to try again when they made mistakes and allowed students to email me when they were unsure of what to do, or where to go next.

Online learning is not something that is going away and will continue to have an upward trend in education. To future enhance the online learning in a K-12 classroom, much more research needs to be done involving how COVID-19 impacted online k-12 instruction. Teachers were expected to implement online learning through little to no online learning information, resources, or training. Hopefully these gaps became aware
during the school closure to administrators and school board members so appropriate action can be taken.

This research is in no way complete and is not an inclusive guide on how to navigate a school through a pandemic. It is important to note that this research has been done in a small, rural, Iowa school. Most of the population are white Christians, with mainly affluent homes. To further this research, one needs to look at a more diverse population and community. Students' home lives drastically play a role in the behaviors and expectations in the classroom. These results will vary with differing student populations.

This work also needs to look at a more diverse population of teachers with more teachers being studied. This study is merely one teacher's perspective on teaching through COVID-19. My personal experience is unlike any others and my outlook was shaped by my prior experiences and interactions. These results will vary from teacher to teacher from district to district from state to state. It would be my recommendation to further this study by looking at teachers with different specialties and of different age ranges.

Reflection

This study impacts science education by reminding science educators that while scientific content is important within the scientific classroom, effective teaching strategies have a greater impact on student success. The students that I taught during the 2019-2020 school closure did not learn any new content but were still able to build upon their scientific knowledge. They did this because of the effective teaching strategies implemented by myself and my team. These students were able to maintain relationships
and cater their learning around their interests. This study was able to show that while content is an important part of the scientific classroom, it is not the most important. An effective science teacher can teach and help students be successful no matter the science content.

During this closure students were able to critically analyze various informational texts, ask meaningful questions, identify reliable resources, and answer their own questions using facts and evidence to support their own thinking and understanding. These students will be more prepared for their high school career with these abilities as well as more prepared for the work force or college. Questioning, researching, analyzing, and critically thinking are life skills that will help those students be more successful in their future endeavors.

This study reiterates the importance for building and maintaining relationships within the classroom as well as the importance of student skill over the memorization of facts. Future classrooms should focus on students being able to ask questions, model their understanding, identifying reliable sources, pulling facts from scientific text, answering their own questions, providing claims that are supported by facts, and being able to be unbiased while doing scientific research. Personal future classrooms will focus on building relationships with the students but also focus on building relationships with their peers. Future classrooms will focus less on the memorization of facts and more of the application of these facts. This study was able to show the importance of those two components all within a three-month time span.
Future work will also include helping students and teachers be more prepared to navigate an online environment. During my research it became clear that many teachers are not prepared to teach or implement technology successfully in the classroom. This can be done by staying on top of popular trends within education and technology as well as the discussion of failures and successes others have had within the online learning environment. Working together we can be more prepared for wherever education goes next.

Getting my master’s degree was something I have always wanted to achieve, and it seems surreal that the process is almost complete. Many life changes have happened during my two years from becoming a wife and a soon to be mother. There have been many interactions and conversations that have helped me grow as a person and as an educator.

It is difficult to think back about all the classes, as some seem like that were so long ago. During this program I enjoyed the flexibility of which classes I could take and those classes ended up being some of my favorites. Of the classes that I could choose, the ones that impacted me the most were Drugs, Poisons, and Venoms. This class helped me to create different ideas for future lesson plans. My second favorite non-required class was Selecting and Integrating Instructional Technology. I found this to be helpful because I was able to learn about new trends in education and how to determine if they would be a good fit for my classroom.

Of the required courses for this major, I believe that it is a toss-up for Trends and Issues in Science Education and Developing and Science Curricula that had the greatest
impact on me as an educator. I had a special interest in those classes because developing and integrating curriculum is something that I am increasingly interested in. Trends and Issues in Science Education was also interesting because it highlighted certain laws that impact the way that we see and teach science. While those are the two classes that stick out the most, all the classes helped teach me valuable lessons in collaboration with peers, ideas for new lessons, questioning and identifying quality research papers, and improved my critical thinking abilities.

From here I would like to eventually become a curriculum director or work with curriculum implementation. I enjoy researching curriculums and discussing with teachers their wants and needs and how I can help.
References


https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/education_ETD_masters/303


Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic


file:///Users/User1/Downloads/article_12900.pdf

Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

https://doi.org/10.17226/25858.


https://doi.org/10.1177/1932202X1002100405


Young, J., & Donovan, W. (2020). Shifting to Online Learning in the COVID-19 Spring-
Appendix A: Journals

Journal 3.15.2020-3.22.2020

Well, the break is over. It is March 20th, and I cannot believe everything that has transpired within the last week. My husband and I have just returned from our honeymoon and the feeling of bliss is definitely gone. The break from social media and the disconnect from my phone and work was much needed. It did, however, leave me at a disadvantaged once I returned to “real life”. The anxiety/fear/confusion I felt before has returned full force as I catch up on emails.

We are officially in a pandemic and all we know is that we will not be returning to school for the time being. While I was gone my administration handled getting information out to the employees very well. So far, they have been very transparent with everything that has been going on. As I check through my work emails there have been many times that my superintendent is straight forward, explaining what we are and are not aware of, and my principle encourages us to focus on our mental health and to deal with this pandemic the best way we know how and to email him with any questions.

While reading my emails, there is a distinct tone change during the week. The first email that mentions school closure was sent by our superintendent on March 15th in response to our governor’s recommendations. He informs us that he will provide more information after the press conference on Monday and indicates that he will keep us informed. That same day, our principle sent an email asking for our patience as this is new territory and to email him with any questions that we may have.

There are no emails until the 17th when our superintendent sends out a district email stating that even though this is our Spring Break, he is working with other administrators to identify how schools will be required to operate at the state and federal level. He again asks for our patience since this level of school closure has never happened.

On March 19th the curriculum director sent out and email telling staff to not share resources with their students. It is said that all resources need to be vetted to ensure that they are age appropriate. These resources need to be able to reach all students and until they have a plan figured out, we are not to share educational resources with our students. The curriculum director also sent a separate email asking staff to stay out of the building unless directed otherwise. There is something about not being able to return to my classroom and the inability to share things with my students that does not sit well with me. Nine months out of the year I dedicate my life to those students and being told to not interact with them is heartbreaking.
On March 20th, the superintendent sends out a clarifying email that does little clarifying. He states that we are not to report to work or to the building. He does state that we can go to the building if needed to gather supplies and an email will go out early next week to inform students when they are able to gather their supplies. He also informs us that as of now, our concerns for students during shut down is being heard but the plan to help them is still unclear.

The final email that I click open sheds a little light on all of the emotions that I have been flooded with over the last 20 minutes while trying to get caught up on emails. It is from a student that I have connected with. While it is brief, it is a small reminder of what I have waiting for me once I return to work.

The worst thing about this situation is the fact that I feel helpless. It seems as if there is nothing I can do to make the situation better for my students, coworkers, or myself. During my years of teaching there has always been some level of uncertainty and the need for flexibility, but this was not something that I saw coming. I still have so many questions. What about state testing? Will we have to make up these days? How are we going to do student grades? We were only three weeks into the new trimester and students only have one assessment in the grade book, how is that going to affect them in high school next year? What are we going to do about sports and extracurricular activities? What is going to be expected of me? What about the students who don’t have access to the internet or the students who have to watch their younger siblings?

All I can do now is wait to see what Monday brings and to remain positive. The relationships that I have built with my students will play a key role in whatever path we chose to go from here. My students are all familiar with Google Classroom and many of the Google apps that work alongside Classroom. I also have an amazing support system both in and out of school. I am hoping that if I repeat these things enough times, than it will help ease some anxiety.

Journal 3.23.2020-3.27.2020

Today is March 27th, 2020, and this week has become more than crazy the one before. It seems as if we have more questions than answers which seemed impossible a week ago. The school is trying to make things as “normal” as possible which is like grasping at straws. I am frustrated but I know everyone is doing the best they can.
The week started Sunday night with my administrator sending out an email informing us that all of the administrators are meeting via Zoom. I usually do not have my work email on my phone as a way disconnect and refill my cup, however, under these circumstances I have decided it best to turn it back on since information comes sporadically throughout the day. This meeting was for the administrators to create a plan on how to move forward. He reminded us to take care of ourselves.

We don’t get any more answers until midmorning on Monday. Our principal emails us and says that we can get to our classroom if we go on Monday, but students will also have access to the building to gather their materials. I decided not to go. Most of my resources are online and I want to wait as long as I can, so the janitors have one less room to deep clean.

The superintendent has the most answers of two. He informs us that non salary staff will continue to get paid until April 10th and will be revisited at a later time if needed. He also informed us that we will be hopefully returning April 13th. After I read this email more questions came to my mind. If we can’t share stuff with students, then what are they going to be doing for a couple of weeks? What are the expectations?

The superintendent sends out more information a few hours later. I cannot decide if I like getting the emails so sporadically and chopped up or if I would rather get all of the information at once. This email makes me feel looked over because the parents received more information than what we did in our email a short time ago. It is this email that we find out that our Curriculum Director is sending out academic resources to our students later in the day. They do address that they are working on getting meals to those in need which is a HUGE relief. He also shares that extra-curricular activities are not going to happen until further notice. With that being the last email of my Monday, it left me feeling annoyed, worried, and a little relieved all at the same time.

Tuesday also gave no certain answers. I am thinking that a straightforward answer is not something that will be coming anytime soon. I did get an email from an instructional coach that went to our middle school science department. He asked if we could meet sometime on Wednesday to discuss resources that we are going to be sharing with our students. The whole day, I feel like there is more I should be doing. I don’t want to email my principal to ask but I don’t want to be caught in the dark either.

Wednesday I got two emails in regard to mental health and how important it is to take care of ourselves during this time. It is starting to become one of those things that I hear so much that I feel like it is starting to lose its meaning. The absolute best part of my day was hearing from a student. I love interacting with students at the middle school level. They are in such a unique part of their development that they can joke with you, have
adult conversations, and be so goofy. It reminded me why I want so badly to go back to work. It felt as if I had some form of purpose again.

I felt purpose again during my science meeting. It was good not feeling alone in all of my worries. The other three individuals in my meeting were feeling the same exact way and helped me more than words can explain. We had a great conversation and our main focus was to provide students with age appropriate ‘things’ they could do while in quarantine. The goal was to make this available for every student. Students had the opportunity to go back into the building to grab their materials and chromebook but we understood that not all students have internet access. These assignments or tasks could not be graded and could not be an introduction to new materials. These materials will be pushed out next week.

This meeting we discussed ways to get students off of their chromebook and doing something that is related to engineering practices. We brainstormed, and decided to have our students stack something as high as they possibly can, take a picture, and submit the picture via google classroom. Seems simple and easy enough, but it will allow us to have a better idea of what students are interacting with us, who has internet access, and who are able to independently upload documents and media to google classroom. We decided to introduce this when we were done with the meeting so we have a better idea by the time we next meet.

The last email we got for the week was from our principal that asked us to participate in an online spirit week to help show the students unity and some form of normalcy. Each day we will post a picture and tag our middle schools’ facebook page. Monday is crazy sock day, Tuesday is a picture of what we are reading, Wednesday is a picture about how we are staying active, Thursday is a picture of you twinning with someone else, and Friday is school spirit day. I like this idea because during the school year I am all about dressing up and showing support.

Journal 3.29.2020-4.03.2020

Once again, this week has been a week with very little concrete answers and more questions. This is one of the joys of working through something that is a new experience for everyone involved. My email has been loaded with many more emails as we try to work through this situation remotely and have a number of individuals that need to collaborate to ensure that students are still being successful.
Some of my favorite emails that I have received this week come from my principal. He has always emphasized maintaining good mental health and during this pandemic, he is proving to be no different. His concern for our well-being started with an email Sunday night and continued throughout the week as he sent different blog posts and emails as a way to make sure that we are taking care of ourselves. He has said many times that we cannot take care of others if we do not first take care of ourselves. His transparency and genuine concern for his staff’s well-being provides me with familiar ease as we enter a week of mystery.

Other highlights of this week were a board meeting, meeting with my PLC, meeting with my team of teachers, hearing from students, and creating a plan to move forward.

Monday was by far one of the busiest days. There were first emails between the science department and the principal were to determine what platform would be best to send information out to students when we reach that point. All of the science teachers at our middle school are using Google Classroom and it was decided to continue to do so since the students are already familiar with how that platform operates. It was suggested to use STEMscopes since that is our science curriculum, but none of the science teachers have used that online platform and it would only add to student confusion and frustration.

The most important email that was received on Monday was a letter from our curriculum director. She provided us with an outline of what our expectations were and what the general plan was for the next three weeks. She was able to give us these directions in a checklist format which helps with the way I organize my own thinking. She also provided parents with tips on how to make this transition easier based on student grade levels. I cannot express the amount of respect and appreciation that I have for all of the hard work that was put in so teachers, parents, and students can have references for where to go next.

On Wednesday we had a PLC meeting and it was so great to see everyone and to hear their voices. On this day we worked from one document that we would use to share resources for parents and students. The goal was not for these resources to be assignments but to be used as a way for students to use their critical thinking skills. We did not want students who could not obtain internet access to fall behind because they did not have that resource.

As a team, we came up with several resources that parents and students could choose to use if they wish. The main goal of the first two weeks is to focus on our engineering standards. We came to the conclusion to focus on asking questions for the first week using a question matrix that I developed earlier in the year. The second week we decided to look at analyzing and interpreting data. Students will be looking at reliable resources to try and find an answer to their questions. We have a rubric that allows students to determine if the resource is reliable or not. We decided on a google form for them to record their questions and a separate form to record their resources. Per the request of our
curriculum director we also looked online for different online resources for parents who wanted their student to be engaged in school activities as soon as possible. After listing them all out, we color-coded them to help us refine our list. The ones in red we decided wouldn’t be the best because they could be overwhelming, orange meant that it would be good later on, and green and white meant that the resources were good to push out.

I also heard from members of my core team. We discussed the best way to push out information to our students. It wasn’t until our language arts teacher emailed us asking about Google Classroom did I realize that not everyone utilized that online resource. I am grateful that I have been using this during the school year so students are already familiar with how to use it. We also set up a time to meet via zoom. I love the teachers that I work with and being able to laugh with them again was huge. We didn’t talk much about school or the nature of things but I loved every second. Building and maintaining relationships is something that everyone on our team values so it was important to meet even if nothing ‘productive’ was accomplished. We scheduled another meeting for Friday which provided us with some level of normalcy since we usually meet twice a week anyways.

On Wednesday we also received a document about how to keep track of children who do not respond to the school district. We are instructed to start this next week and to give students 24 hours to respond to our posts before we fill this out. Our principal also informs us that they (him and other administrators) will begin contacting families tomorrow (Thursday) and Friday to identify specific needs involving internet access. It will be interesting to see how this document changes over time.

Thursday we began thinking about our IEP students. Our strategist sent us an email informing us that he would be calling us later in the day to discuss our plans for our general students and to help us make our assignment doable for all. Luckily for science, we planned on focusing on the engineering standards so they are a little easier, in my opinion, to differentiate to fit student needs. We discussed that the task of asking questions would be suitable to all students since we are providing them with the question matrix.

Right as I was starting to feel better about the situation, we were notified that it is not recommended to communicate with our students due to the irresponsibility of other districts. We were informed that certain online platforms are being hacked and it is in our district’s best interest to wait until all options have been explored before we begin communicating with students in a video chat format.
We were also given a document that provided tips for working with technology. I don’t feel lucky very often, but I do feel lucky as a scroll through this document. Most of the tools I have worked with or have enough experience with technology to troubleshoot generic information. I cannot imagine how frustrating it must be for teachers who do not have the same technical background as me. In no way are my technological skills advanced, but I did experience technology training in my undergrad and have had a few years of practice. I feel overwhelmed the way it is and I cannot imagine how overwhelming it must be to have to learn technology along with trying to convert curriculum and navigate this new climate.

As I start to feel more confident, we receive an email from our superintendent stating that we will remain closed until the end of April. The science activity that we have decided on can be extended but I am interested to see what will happen to current grades and what will be expected of us when we return.

Ending the week with a virtual ‘happy-hour’ was exactly what I needed. Anytime I can meet with my team, it makes my whole day better.

Journal 4.04.2020-4.10.2020

This is the week where we were FINALLY able to communicate with our students and hopefully find our way to some sort of normalcy. Saturday our curriculum director shared our resources with our parents to help prepare them for this upcoming week. She shared out rates for internet providers with students as well as generic resources for students to help them be engaged.

This week the big rock I have is to determine who will be participating in online instruction and who will not be participating in online instruction. As a way to determine if students are checking their science google classroom, we (the science department) have decided to challenge students to build something as tall as they can. In their instructions, they have to upload a video of their creation to google classroom. We chose this activity because it gets them off of their Chromebooks and allows them to practice using technology in a more challenging way. We wanted to make sure this first week that students could upload their own assignments, use their Chromebook camera, and follow basic directions with minimal guidance. Luckily, my students have uploaded pictures before using their Chromebooks and google classroom, so I think my students may have an easier time than others.

Tuesday we had a staff meeting which finally gave us more answers and more information as to what was expected! It was also nice because all of the changes that were going to be happening are for next week. It allows for processing time and time to identify what the next best move is. In this staff meeting, we were given directions as to
what online platform for video conferencing we were supposed to use, a schedule of
when and how to post, staff meeting guidelines, and tips to make our first meeting with
students as successful as possible. We were told that we are not to grade anything but we
are to give feedback and our tasks cannot be longer than 20 minutes. We were given a
laundry list of things to be aware of which is honestly a little overwhelming.

Journal 4.12.2020-4.17.2020

This week has been one for the books. After a nice relaxing Easter weekend, this week
came in full swing. The weekly Monday meetings have been beneficial and a great
addition to my routine, which I am currently struggling with. It is hard to set boundaries
and to know what is expected during remote learning. If I am struggling with this as an
adult I can only imagine how families and students are handling this. During the Monday
meeting, we were told that we are not returning to school this spring and in order to get
stuff from our classroom we have to email our principal and then the custodians will
place it on a table out in the front entryway. I am not fond of this idea but it is better than
nothing. There is just something about being told that I can’t go into my room that
doesn’t help my anxiety or concern.

We were also provided clarity for our google hangouts that started this week. The biggest
take away from that portion of the meeting was that these google meets are not required
of students. This provides some stress relief since we are only having one google meet for
all of our students. I personally was concerned about that. We are also told that we have
to wait until all of the kids are out of the google meet before we close and to recommend
that they download the grid extension on google chrome. We are also reminded that we
need to add to the document for students that we haven’t heard from.

We were also informed that as far as work expectations go, we have to be available to
communicate via email and zooms during our contract hours (7:45-3:45), need to invite
our principal and vice principal to our google meets, and we have to meet with our PLC
team at least 60 minutes every week.

We were also informed that students have the opportunity to improve their existing grade
but nothing can go into the gradebook until further notice. This makes me feel a little
better for those students who would like to improve their grade but all of this happened
before.

The most interesting thing that happened this week was the fact that I was able to see my
students and communicate with them again! Even though I have only known them for a
short amount of time, I have a connection with them and seeing them felt so good. My
communication with them started by uploading expectations, telling them when the
meetings are and more importantly sharing how excited I was to see them! On Wednesday I posted my first ‘assignment’.

As a PLC team we decided to first focus on asking questions and identifying variables. We wanted our students to work on something that they were interested in so maybe then more students would participate since this isn’t something that is impacting their grade. We have also decided to only give one assignment a week. We will introduce the idea on Wednesday and make it due Friday night.

For my first assignment I uploaded a video describing what the task was, a google form to easily gather their questions, NGSS phenomena to help generate ideas, and a question matrix that may help students who become stuck. I used google slides as a way to help organize my own thoughts and tried to share a little about what I was doing to try and connect with them. With the task being as straightforward as it was I didn’t receive very many questions on Wednesday. For this first assignment there were 88% of students who turned in their assignment by Friday. I am pretty pleased with this number since during the school year this is about how many students would turn in assignments in on time not being in a pandemic. Most students were able to create topics and identify the different variables. There were a few students who I needed to provide extra guidance to, but I feel as if it is good practice before they transition to high school.

Friday was the next exciting day since I was able to meet with my students again. I again set up a google slides presentation as a way to provide some normalcy. During a typical science day, I start by completing a bell ringer with the students. This bell ringer is a would you rather question that provides students a low stakes opportunity to share their ideas. It allows for me to get to know my students and allow them to get to know me. This matches my beliefs for how important I think relationships are. Since I received a few questions about the task I kept the meeting more about feedback on how to make the most out of this situation and asked them basic conversation questions. We were told that students may be missing the school interactions and the connections that they have made with peers and teachers so we kept the conversation light. I allowed them time to share about their lives and different ways they were progressing through the pandemic.

Overall I found this week comforting and enjoying. There seemed to be finally some structure and stability which I didn’t realize I was craving so much. I am pleased with the amount of students who are completing assignments and signing into the good meet. I hope that these numbers stay stable until the end of the year but I realize as the weather continues to improve the motivation to complete school work will diminish.
To limit the stress on myself I really only need to focus on few key things. My tasks need to be accessible to all students, they need to be posted by 9:00 am Wednesdays and Fridays, nothing goes into the grade book, my delivery of content needs to be in a one-way video, I cannot record while students are in the online classroom, and I can only use google hangouts as an online classroom, and the hangout cannot be scheduled for longer than 30 minutes. The online classroom will only be open on Wednesdays and Fridays and are not mandatory.

Most of the week was spend emailing the students who did not complete the assignment within 24 hours and emailing our team strategist to create learner boards for the students who may need extra assistance during this time. The only other interesting thing that made things more difficult was our principle and our superintendent getting their email hacked. Luckily no damage was done and it was cleared up rather quickly. I want to think it was a student trying to be funny. I cannot understand why an adult would knowingly add to the stress that administrators are going through.

Friday is when all of the information that we received on Tuesday was relayed to parents. The district sent out a parent letter describing how to find their students’ materials could be accessed and our building principle sent out a daily schedule for parents. This schedule limited classes to include only two classes a day and classes would repeat twice a week. I am optimistic that having my first day on a Wednesday will give me a few more participants than on a Monday. I am also wondering how long it will take for students to realize that these tasks aren’t graded and will not be impacting their grade. It is hard enough to get them to do things in school that aren’t graded let alone at home. I am interested to see how this will progress.

Journal 4.18.2020-4.24.2020

This week you can tell individuals are getting used to the expectations of online learning. The conversations were more meaningful and students began to email me questions about their assignments. Besides the fact that I am stuck at home, and teaching in whatever I want, it feels like we, the staff and students, are gaining more confidence and reaching our striding point.

Mondays are for meetings. Not only do we have our weekly staff meeting but we had to move our PLC meetings to Monday which means that Mondays are my busiest day of the week. I don’t mind though because I like starting the week out productive when I have the most energy and patience.
Staff meetings with 300+ adults, some with limited technological skills, are chaotic and require several reminders about muting a microphone. Sometimes it seems like the middle school teachers behave similarly to middle schoolers. There is a little less tension since as a staff we are more aware of what is going on and we can sketch out the rest of our year. The only new information we received was the clean-out schedule for teachers. The goal is to limit how many people are in the building to reduce the risk. Luckily for me, I don’t need long since I do a lot online, I don’t have to create any demonstrations, and I have only been at WSR for a year. The longest thing I have to do is take my plants home. I haven’t been able to water them since before spring break so it will be interesting to see if I even have any plants left. Since it won’t take long, I think I will wait until after the school year is over and I won’t fill out the form. If the plants are dead there is no point in going back now anyways. I mine as well let the individuals who are at more risk get their things first. I do think it is interesting to see how many people are starting to leave their cameras off. It seems to be increasing.

PLC is where I become the most stressed and I think it is because I am not as tied to the content as others. Sticking with the NGSS engineering standards seems like an easy solution but it is turning out to be pretty stressful for some. Some individuals want to include all of the things that we normally would but I am not sure I see the point. Last week I had a good turn out but eventually, they will figure out that the stuff they are doing isn’t graded so I don’t want to break my back over it. It was discussed to give them Earth Day activities but I might just give that to them as an option.

We eventually decide that we going to continue to build off of the question they developed last week and focus on Obtaining and Evaluating Information. I share with my team the template for the students have I have created and my evaluation of a website tool. On this template, students will have to research information about their topic that will help them answer their questions. They have to find 4 reliable websites. Students will know the website is reliable if it scores a 15 or higher on the rubric. Again, I am reminded of how fortunate I am. I have an internet evaluation tool that allows the students to determine if their website is reliable or not. My students have already used this but not all science classrooms have utilized this resource. It will be easier for my students to use this tool since they are familiar with it.

Once everyone is satisfied with the direction we are going we decided to start looking at next year. This past year we piloted OpenSciEd which is a free middle school science curriculum that our AEA recommended. The pilot went well and we have decided to invest in it. The only issue is that it will be a while before all of the units are out. There is also a rumor that we will be teaching 7th and 8th next year. Right now we have one seventh grade science teacher, one eighth grade science teacher (me), and one science teacher that teaches both contents. I am not sure how I feel about this switch. I am nervous about lesson planning for two grades and implementing a new curriculum in both
but we will have to just wait and see. It doesn’t do me any good to worry about what I cannot control.

It was also on Monday when I got emails plenty of emails. There were only three that stood out to me the most. The first was shared by the math teacher on my team. It was a google sheet indicating who has not joined his google classrooms. This is one of the teachers who didn’t use or know how to use google classroom until after the pandemic started. I am stress enough the way it is, and I cannot imagine having the stress of trying to learn a new platform, get students into it, all while keeping track of who you do or do not hear from, or what assignments they are or aren’t doing. He is extremely stressed but I am unaware of how to help him. Sometimes venting is the best medicine.

The second most interesting email I received was from our guidance counselor regarding a student question. This particular student, who has a great relationship with our counselor, began asking her question about how all of this work will be impacting her grade. The counselor who is much more eloquent than I reminded her of the importance of being ready for high school. The counselor did not say if the student bought it or not but I fear this is where the realization for them occurs. I was hoping the students wouldn’t figure out that the assignments are graded for at least another week or two. Knowing this as I begin putting together my slides for Wednesday and Friday’s meet makes me wonder how many assignments I will receive.

The last email was an email that made me feel sad or like I wasn’t doing enough. As educators, several times throughout the year we have medical evaluation forms that we have to fill out due to a child's medical needs. These medical needs most commonly include ADD, ADHA, anxiety, or depression. A parent asked our team to fill out a medical form regarding their student’s ADD. At first, I didn’t think it would be a problem but then I realized that I haven’t seen this child for a month and we are living in the middle of a pandemic. Students without attention issues are struggling so I cannot even begin to imagine what this student is going through. I feel like I am not doing enough to appropriately address the student’s needs and the doctor’s concerns. Eventually, our principal instructs us not to complete the form.

For this week’s task, I have decided to go with one slide show to make things a little easier on my part. This will also be easier for students since they can reference everything they need in one slide presentation. I try to make things as ‘normal’ as possible by including different things that I have been doing to keep myself busy and by a would you rather question to start the google meet.

The week goes off without a hitch for the most part. We hear from some students who have been otherwise not showing up. We address parent concerns about students feeling embarrassed to open up the camera on google meets or to see if the student is completing the work like they say they are. It seems like by the time I got through Monday, the rest
of the week is a downhill slide. I feel like I need to be doing more. It is odd to go from teaching all day long to teaching twice a week for about thirty minutes.

Journal 4.26.2020-5.01.2020

This week began like all of the others before. We started with our staff meeting which was mainly a reiteration of meeting past. The principal told us the plan to allow students to clean out the lockers as well as the plan for teachers to clean out their room. I find my mind wandering during this part of the meeting and think about how if I am having a hard time staying focused and engaged, how hard this must be for students. We end the meeting with the reminder to focus on building and maintaining the relationships we have established throughout the year and the introduction of the fact that they (counselors, instructional coaches, and administrators) are starting to finalize the schedule for next year. We are told to be flexible because there will be some drastic changes next year and the pandemic will surely change things often. I assume that he is talking about the fact that we will be teaching two content areas. I wish I could get a definite answer so I can begin looking at 7th grade material and converting to an online format. The meeting ends with the reminder to maintain our mental health and to do things that fill our cups. Filling my cup is rather difficult since everything is closed, I can’t see my family, and I am home alone all day. I do live next to a walking trail which is nice and has helped substantially.

During PLC we discuss this week’s assignment that we are going to have our students complete. This week they will be using the resources they found to answer their smaller questions that they developed in week one. Week one was a decent assignment, which I feel like I didn’t do a great job of explaining. When they developed the main question in the first week, they also had to develop two questions that would help them answer their big question. I have described it to them in the past like an inch question verses a foot question. Inch questions are questions that you can type into the search bar and the answer will pop up. Foot questions are the questions that if you type it into the search bar you will have to look through several different resources and make a claim about all of the information that you analyzed. Foot questions can be refuted or debated but are made up of the smaller inch questions. So when they go through the resources they found last week they will be trying to find an answer to their first inch question. This question is going to be answered by finding 8 different facts. Breaking up the research by inch questions will allow for us to research the second question next week, and then they can make a claim to answer their foot question the week after and then we only have one week left. We decided to finish this task a week before the last week of school which will allow for more fun activities that the students will hopefully be more engaged in.

The idea to finish this project sooner rather than later is confirmed to be a good idea as the week progresses. This week I received two questions about grades involving what they can do to fix their trimester three grades. Twice I had to admit that we are going off of trimerst two grades and not reporting trimester three grades. I try to add an emphasis
that even though the things that they are doing doesn’t impact their grades it will help prepare them for high school and ensure that they are not too far behind. I hope the motivation to be prepared for high school is enough but I am having my doubts. Now that at least three of my students know that this work isn’t graded I am almost positive that I will see a decrease in assignment submissions. It makes it hard to put my best effort in when I know that students won’t be completing the assignments. I have to keep reminding myself that even though some won’t complete it, some will and it is imperative to help them be as prepared as possible for their high school career.

During the middle of the week we get an email about student celebrations and our weekly student check in for responses. As a Leader In Me school we try to do monthly celebrations where we recognize students following one of the 7 Habits. We get and email that asks us to fill out a form recognizing students during this time. We also get emails asking if we have heard anything from certain students. Some students are doing GREAT at staying on task and completing the different assignments however, there are some students who haven’t done a single assignment for me.

One of the things that I am most excited about this week is the Read and Feed email and document that got sent out. It recognized that we are stuck at home and we need fresh ideas for what to read and what to cook for supper. This document came in just the lick of time because I have spent endless hours trying to find books to read. I am rather picky when it comes to books but I think there are several good ones. I decided to download The Girl In The Blue Coat. It is a mystery book and I am enjoying it. I think I will work my way through these books rather quickly. I mainly like mystery or thriller books and there are several books that are self help. I don’t see anything wrong with that but I can only read so many before I get bored.

Friday ended with an email saying that we will not have a staff meeting since it is teacher appreciation week. The principle encourages us to drive to the school so teachers can do a ‘drive-by’ to get a surprise. The email ends by saying it’s not required so I am not sure if I will go. If I lived in the same town as my school I would be more inclined to go, but driving twenty minutes there and back is not something I am inclined to do since Monday is usually the busiest day of the week.

Some weeks, I like virtual teaching. This is a week where I like it. It has been so nice this past week that online schooling has provided me the flexibility to be outside more. In a typical year, when it is nice, I simply watch outside and try to make move my lessons around to try to get some Vitamin D. However, with virtual learning, I can teach and answer questions from anywhere. I am able to do my zoom meeting outside and I am able to answer student or parent questions while I am walking or kayaking. I understand that checking my phone and being plugged into work all of the time can develop into an
unhealthy relationship but as of right now, this week, this moment, I am enjoying the flexibility.

Usually, as I have said in the previous journals, Mondays are my busiest days since I have a staff meeting and my PLC meeting but this Monday did not start out that way. With this week’s staff meeting being canceled, my first meeting didn’t start until around 1. The instructional coach who is assigned to our science department wasn’t there so we were even a little less productive than the other meetings before. We (my PLC) are definitely ready for the end of the year and ready for summer break. This PLC was chill because we knew what we were going to be doing. We essentially took the same document from last week and had students look up the answer to their second inch question. We thought this would be an easy task since they had already looked up one of their questions however, one Wednesday when I posted my assignment I got more questions from students via email than I was expecting. It was only three, but I was still surprised.

I was also surprised this week when a parent emailed me to inform me that their student wouldn’t be showing up for virtual classes next week. Our team didn’t have much information in regards to the assignments that needed to be completed, but it was nice to see that some parents and students were taking the assignments and this part of the school year seriously. I have several students who I have not seen from at all. They were checked out before spring break started but I thought I would have at least seen them at the beginning. I worry about those students the most. I understand that the motivation isn’t there but what is their freshman year of high school going to be when they haven’t done any school for six months? They already didn’t have the best work ethic or time management skills and I can assume that this isn’t helping. I just want them to be successful for what comes next, no matter what that looks like for them. I know their is nothing I can do, but I feel like I am doing them a disservice or that I need to be doing more. I know that I am not the only one feeling this way but it is a terrible feeling.

Our school building has been focus on getting lockers cleaned out and preparing for next year. On Friday our principal sent out a locker clean out plan to parents and to staff. They are only allowing ten individuals in the building at a time to grab their bags. Essentially what the janitors did was they opened the lockers, but their items either in their school bags or in plastic bags, and placed the bags on the floor outside of the locker. This allows for students to walk directly to their locker, grab their bag, and not touch anything else. Honestly students grabbing materials, besides their chromebooks, has not even been on my radar. I cannot imagine the amount of work and stress that administrators are going through. Trying to organize everything in a safe manner and all of the moving pieces seems extremely overwhelming.

We are almost done with this school year and I can only hope that we are in person for the start of next year.
Well after a pretty chill week last week, this week came swinging at full force. On Monday we had our usual staff meeting and I rather enjoyed it. It seemed like we were finally given some answers. I guess only one answer which was the plan for the last week of school. It is still two weeks away but I was happy to hear about it. Our principal has yet to answer the big question on if we will be teaching more than one content, i.e. seventh and eighth grade, but I am choosing to believe the rumors that we are. Why not add another change when we might be teaching remotely during a year that will inevitably be like no other year before (I am saying that with sarcasm). I am starting to think that nothing will be the same for next year which highly stresses me out. I have to keep reminding myself that those decisions are above my pay grade and there is nothing I can do.

I am happy to learn that we do not have to make up our snow days and in fact, the student’s last day will be May 27th and the last day of school for staff is only a half-day on May 28th. I am required to have one google meet on that Wednesday and to give them a farewell message. It is sad that this is how I have to say goodbye and I wonder how many students will even show up. My numbers are dwindling for those who sign in, most weeks it is one or two for a google meet, and the number of assignments that are getting turned in is becoming less and less. That is why as a PLC team we have decided to wrap up our ‘project’ this week.

My last post will have to be on that Wednesday and the last day for students will be that Thursday. As a team, we have autonomy as to what the last day of school will look like. We decided to break it up into periods and have the students run through their ‘schedule’ to say goodbye to the individuals who were in their classes. The meeting times are ten minutes. I like it because it is simple and fast. Hopefully, when the students realize that they are only there for ten minutes in each class, more of them will show up.

During our PLC meeting, we actually accomplish a lot, mostly because of the lack of work we did last week. We develop a document that students will have to fill out in order to answer their foot question. They have to provide the answer in a claim, evidence, reasoning form. That takes little to no time and we spend the remainder of the time penciling out what our scope and sequence for next year will look like. We have decided to incorporate as many OpenSciEd units as we can. I am happy that we are choosing this curriculum but that needs to be added to the list of changes that are going to be made next year. Our last task is to determine what our last assignment will be for our students. Since we are a science department and as of now we all don’t have the same grade, it needs to be something that is appropriate for both seventh and eighth grade. One member in our PLC team shares a slide show that has zoomed up images and then the students would have to guess what they are. Then at our final meeting, we can share what the right
answers are. I think I am going to do this and I may make a competition out of it so I will hopefully get more students to participate.

An individual in our PLC team has the principal’s ear and has a very good hunch that we will in fact be teaching two content areas. I am happy to be teaching 7th grade again, but teaching two content areas will be tough. I wonder if I will have another planning period or how the schedule, in general, will look like.

We aren’t even done with this year and I am already panicking about next. There are still so many unknowns that I am not sure what to prepare for over the summer. If we are teaching online. The World History teacher that is on my team utilizes Google Slides and the students have to drag and drop things. That may work for some of my assignments but not all. I also need to see what online labs there are in relation to the topics we will be teaching.

I want to prepare but part of me wants to wait until I know for sure what the next year will look like. Hopefully next week we will get even more answers to help take some of these anxieties away.

Journal 5.17.2020-5.22.2020

We officially have four days left of the 2019-2020 school year. I am so excited to take my work email off of my phone and leave the anxiety behind. This week I have decided that I need to worry less about the things that I cannot control. This realization came to fruition after a conversation I had with my husband. The amount that I let the anxiety control me is getting to an unhealthy level and I cannot pour from an empty cup. If I don’t take care of myself and my own mental health I will not be able to help students or my peers. It’s odd but worrying about my own mental health makes me feel a bit selfish. There are so many individuals who have it worse than I, and I should be worrying about them, but that is out of my control. That is why that I have decided to not preplan for next year. This summer I am going to focus on self-growth and making sure that my cup is as full as possible before the next school year.

This decision was based on a variety of things and not just the conversation with my husband the conversation but the idea of focusing on myself in my head and after our staff meeting on Monday, it seemed like an even better idea. Our superintendent and curriculum director joined our staff meeting. At first, I naively thought we were going to get concrete answers but by this point, I should know better. They mainly talked about the Return to Learn plan that all schools have to have submitted to the Iowa Department of Education by July. Essentially in August, we have to be prepared for three different situations. The first situation is a completely virtual school year, the second is a hybrid model, and the third is fully in-person with certain mitigation protocols in place.
Personally, I think the hybrid model would be the worst. This would entail two different groups of students, A and B, coming to the school at different weeks. A group would come week one and B would attend week two and they would continue to flip-flop. While not in school students would be completing their exploratory classes such as STEM, FCS, and Art. Individuals at this age crave consistency and relationships and I think the hybrid model negatively impacts both. We either need to be completely online or completely in-person. Not to mention all of the stress and uncertainty we have had this year, the teachers need consistency and relationships as well. Not to mention that next year we are going to have to reteach more since the students were out of school longer but this model we would only get through a week’s worth of lessons every two weeks. During a normal year, we have a hard time reaching all of the standards, there is no way we could effectively teach all of the science standards needed while going that slow. The only good thing in my opinion about a hybrid model is that teachers would have Fridays off so the custodial staff could deep clean.

This is not my circus and not my monkeys to worry about. I need to keep repeating that so I don’t put myself into a panic.

The one good thing that happened is that we are able to meet in person with our PLCs on the following Friday if we are all comfortable with it. During our PLC meeting we decided that it would be alright to meet since it only consists of the three of us and our science rooms are fairly big. I cannot express my excitement. I have seen no one but my husband in about two months. Being about to physically see facial expressions and social cues and general interaction is something I have been missing. I used to think I could like working from home but this has 100% taught me otherwise. I never realized how much of my mental health depended on the interactions with others. I am pretty introverted so this realization is one that I did not expect.

The Zoomed-in Picture Challenge was what we for sure chose to be our final assignment. I made mine more of a competition as I thought I would do last week. My students love a good competition and I am desperate to try anything to get them engaged. I had not one person so up for either of my Google Meets and I am sure that is because it is getting nice out. I hope at least some show up for the final.

Journal 5.25.2020-5.29.2020

I have survived the impossible. I am officially done with the 2019-2020 school year. This has been the most difficult two months of teaching and I can finally enjoy the summer. This week has been information overload and my head is spinning.
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Even though we did not have work on Monday, we had our weekly staff meeting on Tuesday. I can say that I finally got some of the answers I wanted but I am not sure yet how I feel about them. Our principal shared with us the three possible schedules that we could have. He did say that they were going to try everything in their power to have us go back in person this fall. This is also the first time that our principal has specifically told us that we will be teaching two grade levels. He explained his reasoning and I understand why but I personally think it would be better to hire more content teachers so then we could have two eighth grade teams and two seventh grade teams. Obviously, that isn’t going to happen but I do not like the idea of losing my team time. We will have teams but it doesn’t seem like they are given enough priority. If COVID has taught us anything it’s that relationships are key to being successful in middle school. I also understand that building relationships isn’t everyone’s highest priority, and middle schools always get either high school teachers or elementary teachers so there is always a difference in opinions but holy smokes. I do not understand how we can even be thinking about taking away teaming during COVID. Again, that is above my pay grade, it is not within my zone of control.

During our Tuesday meeting, we are also given the information about SEL and being more mindful in incorporating it into our classrooms. SEL stands for Social-Emotional Learning. We talk through the different zone and work on checking ourselves. The principal seems to have the same belief as me in that you can’t pour from an empty cup. He discusses how hard the last few months have been on our students and to provide them with grace when they return to school and as we begin to plan. He discusses the expectations for our Friday PLC meeting and informs us that the document will be coming out later this week.

Once the meeting is over I email my team to problem solve on the best way to increase student engagement on the last day of school. We decided that it would be best to have one link per subject area and to have them go out with the times on one document or email. We predicted that having it all in one area would help increase the chance of them coming.

The last things that I post for the 2019-2020 school year are the answers for the photo challenge, the winners per class, and a feedback form. I decided to include a feedback form because there is a possibility that we will be going to a hybrid model or a completely online model next school year. I know that is impossible to plan for but I am hoping that this will help my outlook from the students’ perspective and hopefully I am able to take their feedback to make their experience next year as meaningful as possible.

The last day of interacting with students went fast and didn’t have many students. A team member sent the students on our team our schedule and each teacher’s links for the
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Google Meets. I had about 24% of my students show up. Even though it wasn’t a lot of my students, I was happy to see the ones that were there. I have different emotions as the Google Meet comes to a close. I am happy that I am done with this stress, I feel bad for the students who missed out on sports and teacher connection, but I also feel happy that the students are done with the stress of school. I also worry about their high school career. Next year is going to be challenging for the students who did show up, so I can’t imagine how much difficult it will be for those who checked out after spring break.

Friday was by far the best day. It gave me some sense of normalcy. The goal was to look at next year and begin planning out what each grade would look like. We had a template to fill out for our seventh and eighth grades. Honestly, the OpenSciEd helped with the process a lot. It was pretty easy and didn’t take long. We stopped after the first couple of units because we didn’t see the point in planning for a whole year when we don’t know what will be happening. Once we are satisfied with our planning documents we begin ordering science supplies. This was difficult because we didn’t want to order more than we need but we aren’t sure which mitigation protocols will be in place. For example, can we share lab materials, will we only be able to do demonstrations?

Even though I left Friday with worries and questions, I still felt so much better. It felt good to go into my classroom. It felt good to talk to like-minded people. It felt good to hear I am not the only one struggling with how the school year ended or where to go from here. We all made a commitment to fill our cups during the summer and to not spend the who summer worrying about what we can’t control. While that is easier said than done, I am hoping that we will hold each other accountable.
Appendix B: Curriculum

Documents Sharing Ideas

Task #3: Earth Day Celebration

Directions:
1. Watch "What is Earth Day?" to learn about the history of Earth Day and why we celebrate it.
2. Pick at least 1 Earth Day activity option from the list below to complete.
   a. Post a picture, video or document (whichever makes the most sense for your chosen activity) of your completed work to the Google Classroom assignment posting.
   b. In the "private comment" part of your Google Classroom post, write about why you chose the option(s) below.
   c. Earth Day Choice Options:
      • Earth Day Poem - Read this poem. Then, write your own Earth Day or Nature Poem.
      • Scavenger Hunt - Make your own copy of the linked document to record what you are able to find as you explore nature.
      • Water Rocks! Challenges - You can submit your challenge to the Water Rocks! Website by Friday, April 24th for a chance to win a prize. The link contains directions for both of the following challenges:
         ○ Chalk Challenge - "Create a sidewalk chalk masterpiece featuring one of the themes provided by Water Rocks!"
         ▪ An alternative to chalk is using marker/color pencil/paint to draw a picture and hang in your window or paint your window to create window art instead of sidewalk art.
         ○ Art from Nature - "Gather natural objects such as feathers, rocks, sticks, leaves, pinecones and seeds and arrange found objects artistically."
      • Recycling Made New
         ○ Create something new from recycled materials like plastic bottles, toilet paper tubes, etc. There are lots of YouTube video tutorials and ideas if you search "recycling creations."
         ○ Check out some examples made by my children, ✓

Custom-fit sandals made from recycled paper

Sailboats from plastic jars/containers

Counting/color sorting activity for Pheebe.
There are two versions of the image: one with all of the pictures followed by the answers and a second one with the pictures directly followed by the answer. I'm not sure which I'll use or if I might post answers in a totally different post. I haven't decided on all the logistics yet, but thought I'd share the pictures.
### CRAP Checklist: Prove that your research source isn’t CRAP! Use this as a guide!

Pay specific attention to the three highlighted areas.

*Hint: The more "Yes" answers you get, the better your website!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Currency</th>
<th>How old is the information?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is it a science or technology-based document? Does it cover current events? If so, it needs to be very current. If it is a humanities or historical document, these documents can be decades old and still relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When was this site last updated? What date can you find?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is it current enough for your project?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliability</td>
<td>Who is sponsoring this publication?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the information come from a school or government organization? (edu, gov and sometimes .org—non-profit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority</td>
<td>Who is behind the information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there a specific author listed on the website?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What knowledge or skill does this author have in the topic area?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the author’s email address, contact information, included?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is the information from a known and trusted organization?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Is there a bibliography given citing the website sources used? Do links go to other reliable information?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>What is the motive of the site?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the website seek to inform you and present various sides of an argument or issue?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Does the information use neutral language? Is it free of bias (clearly one-sided opinion), and not trying to sell you something?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Good Morning!

For those of you who haven’t been checking email, or google classroom, there is an assignment that is posted. I am sending you this email because you have yet to complete the assignment. It is pretty easy and painless and should not take more than twenty minutes.

The thing that might take the longest is uploading a video portion. Most of you are extremely tech savvy so I think that you will be fine. If you have any questions feel free to email me or look on google classroom.

I am SO EXCITED to hear from you!

--
Kelsey Bram posted a new assignment: Questions about what interests you.
Apr 15, 2020

Kelsey Bram
Apr 13, 2020

A lot of you have asked about science and how it will look this week so I wanted to provide several clarifying statements.
1. SCIENCE will be done on WEDNESDAYS and FRIDAY
2. I will post a video WEDNESDAYS and FRIDAY by 9 am
3. Google Hangouts for SCIENCE will be WEDNESDAY and FRIDAY from 1:00 pm-1:30 pm.
4. To get to our Google Hangout, you can either use the link provided in this post or click on google calendar link.
5. If you have ANY QUESTIONS PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, email me!
6. I miss you and I look forward to seeing you on Wednesdays and Fridays in our google hangout

Class video meeting
https://meet.google.com/qaf...

Questions about what interests you.
Due Apr 17, 2020, 5:00 PM

1. Watch the video
2. Fill out Google Form
3. Hit the Turn In Button
4. Enjoy your week :)

15 Turned in
6 Assigned

Untitled: Apr 13, 2020 3:5...
Video

Question Martix
Google Drawings

What Do You Want To Kn...
Google Forms
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

What Do You Want To Know?

* Required

Name *
Your answer

Question 1 *
Your answer

Question 2 Using "How" at the beginning.*
Your answer

For your question 2, what is your dependent variable? *
Your answer

For your question 2, what is your independent variable? *
Your answer

Submit

Never submit passwords through Google Forms.
https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLS4uU02EYmXNkkK_0AFk5SQ-hLZCv5Snpbq1JFztv5cvn4QA/viewform
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What?</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Where?</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>When?</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Who?</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why?</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>How?</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Announcements:
--Google Hangout today from 1:00 pm - 1:30 pm
--Assignment (this one Due Friday)

Instructions:
*Watch Video
*Fill out Obtaining and Evaluating Information Doc
*Email Mrs. Bram with any questions
*Be out in nature for Earth Day
### Directions:
For each online source you use in your research, use the rubric to determine its credibility.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author</td>
<td>Author's name is easy to find. Author has previous knowledge and experience with the subject.</td>
<td>Author's name is not easy to find. Author may not have experience with the subject and uses common knowledge.</td>
<td>The author's name is unknown.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact information</td>
<td>There is a clear and easy way to contact the author or organization responsible for the website.</td>
<td>It is difficult to find contact information for the author or organization responsible for the website.</td>
<td>There is no contact information available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>This website is sponsored by a respectable, well-known organization. The sponsoring organization is clearly identified.</td>
<td>The website is sponsored by an organization that is not well known or is unrelated to the subject matter.</td>
<td>There is no clear sponsoring organization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Update frequency</td>
<td>The date of publication is clearly listed and the website is updated frequently.</td>
<td>The website has not been updated frequently and the article was published years ago.</td>
<td>There are no dates of publication or website updates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Factuality</td>
<td>The website is fact-based and appears to be free of opinion or bias.</td>
<td>The website appears factual, but the author has included some personal opinions.</td>
<td>The facts of this website are questionable and may be biased.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sources and citing</td>
<td>The author refers to and cites other sources to support the content.</td>
<td>The author refers to other sources, but does not provide citations or links.</td>
<td>The author does not provide the source of his or her information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website purpose</td>
<td>The website exists to educate and inform.</td>
<td>The website exists to influence the audience to believe something.</td>
<td>The website exists to sell a product or for the author's personal gain.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

4/9/2021

What Do You Want To Know?
* Required

Name *
Your answer

Question 1 *
Your answer

Question 2 Using “How” at the beginning. *
Your answer

For your question 2, what is your dependent variable? *
Your answer

For your question 2, what is your independent variable? *
Your answer

Submit

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSvLeUe02ZKmXNnJ5K_G0ApkS9Q-hzCvS8mp8qJ5Fz7V5ncQA/viewform
**OBJECTIVE**- to obtain and evaluate information to assist with our questions! I have included my example to help guide you along, *DELETE MY EXAMPLE AND ADD YOURS :)*

**Step 1:** Post your ‘How’ question here? (If you forgot, look at the response sheet): Ex: How does adding vanilla pudding affect the softness of chocolate chip cookies?

**Step 2:** Create two questions that you will search in google to help you find information:
- Question 1- What are different factors that affect chocolate chip cookies?
- Question 2- What are the ingredients of vanilla pudding?

**Step 3:** Use the Credible Resource Guide to assist you in answering your questions.
- Please make sure your sources are hyperlinked and specific. Ex- [npr.org](http://npr.org)
- Not...google
- Your biggest challenge will be creating the right search. Try not to be too specific. Many of you will want to just google the question you created. That might not work. Start broad and get more specific!
- Needs to have score of 15 or higher!!

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Name</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Science Behind Baking Your Ideal Chocolate Chip Cookie</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Diving Into Research

- Apr 29, 2020

For this assignment you will be looking through the websites that you found in the previous assignment.

1. Watch the video
2. Open ‘Diving Into Research’
3. Pick what option you would like to do (Option 1 or Option 2)
4. Start your research
5. Complete Document
6. Turn in document

If you have any questions, please email me or come to the google meet at 1:00 pm today!

Clariﬁcation of “Diving Into Research”

*Assignment due by 5:00 pm today*

Clarification of “Diving Into Research”

264 2020 5:00 PM
OBJECTIVE- to start diving into research. You need to do ONE of two options to begin your research. It may be helpful to have last week’s document open to help.

Step 1: Retype your ‘How’ question.
Ex: How does adding vanilla pudding affect the softness of chocolate chip cookies?

Step 2: Pick an option.

Option 1: Look at question TWO from last week. Using some resources that you have already found, find 8 different facts that are related to your question. What are your two questions from last week?

Question 2: What are the ingredients of vanilla pudding?
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

OR
Diving into Research Part 2

- May 6, 2020

Due May 8, 2020, 5:00 PM

1. Watch Video
2. Open Previous Documents
3. Pick Option 1 or 2 (if your chose option 1 last time, you can do option 2 this time or vise versa)
4. Turn in Document By Friday.
5. After the rainy day yesterday - GO OUTSIDE

Untitled: May 6, 2020 6:28 AM Video
Week of May 4th Google Slides

Diving Into Research Part 2 Google Docs

Class comments
OBJECTIVE— to start diving into research. You need to do ONE of two options to begin your research. It may be helpful to have last week’s document open to help.

Step 1: Retype your ‘How’ question.
Ex: How does adding vanilla pudding affect the softness of chocolate chip cookies?

Step 2: Pick an option.

Option 1: Look at question ONE from last week. Using some resources that you have already found, find 8 different facts that are related to your question. What are your two questions from last week?

Question 1— What are different factors that affect chocolate chip cookies?
1. 
2. 
3. 
4. 
5. 
6. 
7. 
8.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch the video</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go through the Google Slides on your own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open the doc and begin working through the steps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Google Meet for Today at 1 is at the bottom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Video**

*Untitled: May 12, 2020 7:28...

**Google Slides**

*Week of May 12th

**Google Docs**

*The Final Answer

**Class video meeting**

*http://meet.google.com/qaf-hho...
OBJECTIVE - to answer the question that has been driving our research.

"Feel free to delete the orange, it is only there as a reference"

Step 1: Retype your ‘How’ question.
Ex: How does adding vanilla pudding affect the softness of chocolate chip cookies?

Step 2: Identify Independent and Dependent Variables
→ What is your Independent variable?
   ◆ Vanilla pudding
→ What is your dependent variable?
   ◆ Chocolate Chip Cookie Softness

Step 3: Identify your answer (in CER form of course :))
In C-E-R Form, answer the following question,

“How does your independent variable change your dependent variable?“

Claim: Chocolate chip cookies with vanilla pudding that has been added are softer than those without.
Evidence: According to celebratingsweets.com there is cornstarch in vanilla pudding.
Reasoning: Having cornstarch as an ingredient is important because the cornstarch is the reason for how soft a cookie is.

Step 4: Submit Submit this Google Doc to Google Classroom by this Friday, May 22nd, at 5:00 pm.
Zoomed in Photo Challenge
- May 20, 2020

Due May 22, 2020, 5:00 PM

1. Watch the Video
2. Go through the May 20th PowerPoint
3. Open up Zoomed In Images PowerPoint
4. Open up Google Form
5. Guess as many of the pictures as you can—If you don’t know the answer, don’t put down a guess—
6. When filling out the google form make sure you’re looking at the slide number and not the picture number. *my mistake but I think we will be fine*
7. Hit the turn in button after the google form has been filled out.

 Untitled: May 20, 2020 8:42 ... Video
 Week of May 20th

 Zoomed In Image Challenge Google Forms

 Class comments
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Zoomed In Image Challenge

Look at the images and try to guess what those images are. If you don’t know feel free to skip the question.

* Required

1. Name First and Last *

2. Slide 2 is...

3. Slide 3 is...

4. Slide 4 is...

5. Slide 5 is...

6. Slide 6 is...

7. Slide 7 is...

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/EaUJx2ZzVb5I/rF9xNzDxEdPbPq6(xkCnEcY1C7Dxwmebf4Q
Can You Identify Everyday Objects By These Close-Up Pictures?

Is this an animal? A plant? Shooting stars?

Everything is not what it seems—and these 15 magnified objects are proof. Can you identify them close up?

Credit: Reader’s Digest Brittany Gibson
May 27, 2020

Answers and winners for the challenge
1. You must watch to find out the winners and answers
2. If you have time, fill out the google form
3. Show up to say good by tomorrow.

Untitled: May 27, 2020 9:....
Video

Into the Unknown
Google Forms
Into the Unknown

How can we improve the online learning for?

* Required

1. What do you think went well? *

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What do you think did not go well? *

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. How could we improve upon what didn't go well? *

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
Appendix C: District/Building Documents

Emails From Staff

Superintendent

Sun, Mar 15, 9:29 PM

Tonight the governor recommended that schools close for four weeks. I'm not sure what a "recommendation" in this case means, but it sounds very much like it will be a mandate. She is having a press conference tomorrow to provide details. When we know more, you will know more.

Sent from my iPhone

Clarification - Monday

Thu, Mar 19, 4:56 PM

I have received this question several times, and that probably means more people are wondering. Please do not report to work during this school closure unless you have been individually directed to do so. We will have more detailed information for all of you Monday afternoon.

Sharing of Educational Resources

Thu, Mar 19, 4:24 AM

Good morning, teachers. I wanted to touch base with you all as we continue to navigate this unfamiliar context. We are receiving new guidance daily and working to understand what it all means for us. Just yesterday we received more clear guidance on the sharing of educational resources. When we share resources with families, this is considered to be the provision of educational opportunities to students, which then brings with it all special education requirements. Because of this, we need to be conscious that all resources we share are accessible and appropriate for all our learners. In order to do this, we will likely need to vet resources at the admin team level. With this week being spring break, we have a little extra time to develop and enact a plan. Please hold off on sharing any educational resources with your students and families until we do so. The administrative team is meeting first thing Monday morning, and we will communicate in more detail after we meet.

Thank you for your patience, resilience, and flexibility as we move through this together.

Happy Friday

Fri, Mar 20, 4:51 PM

Today marks the end of what turned into a really long week for many of you. Normally, a long spring break week is a good thing, but this year that’s not necessarily the case.

Anyway, I wanted to inform you all that I have little to inform you of. If anything, there seems to be a little more uncertainty rather than the other way around. I guess that’s to be expected when we’re all dealing with something with which we have no experience.

I appreciate your ongoing patience. But more so, I appreciate your concern for our students and what this shut-down means for them. Unfortunately, at this time there is not a whole lot we can do.

To make it clear, there will be no school until we tell you otherwise. And unless you’re notified by me or your direct supervisor, you are not to report to work. You may, however, come to the school to pick up any items that you might need at home. Early next week we will be informing parents and students about when they can come to the schools to pick up items they may need, as well.

Be well.
Building Access

Staff,

will be communicating to families our building access times.

These will be Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 3:00-6:00. Each family will be asked to enter the building with one adult and their child. They may pick up their belongings and leave the building immediately. There is an exception to practice social distancing. Teachers should not be in the rooms. We will open the band room and locker rooms. The 7th and 8th grade classrooms will not be unlocked since the kids should have most of their belongings in their lockers.

and his staff will clean the school to the best of their ability after each shift. We will allow them to do this the next morning. We will focus on lockers (handles) and door handles.

We will have

in the main office giving medications back to families. They both will be in the office on Tuesday and will split Wednesday and Thursday nights.

will be available to help with lockers. I will not be in the building given any time out of state.

So, if you need something, please plan on going today to gather materials.

Please let me know if you have questions.

What we know

What we know is little more than we know last week, but there are a couple of things that I wanted to make you aware of.

First, I will be sending an email out to all parents today to explain a few things to them. I will send you a copy of that email to keep you in the loop.

Second, we will have a special school board meeting tomorrow evening for one purpose, and that is for them to consider a resolution that does two things. One, it makes sure that the board recovers during this emergency that allows me to make decisions that are in the best interest of staff and students and, two, formalizes the fact that all staff will be paid through the end of this current closure. If the closure goes beyond April 10, then they will consider their options at that time.

Many are asking me about our return. Currently we are still saying that students will return on April 13, and we are still operating under that assumption. Given the current situation, however, I’m not confident that is going to happen.

That’s what I have to share for now. I am meeting daily with our administrative team, so look for more updates from me, or one of them, as we learn and develop them.

Continue to try to keep yourself out of harm’s way and let me know if you have any questions or concerns.
email to parents

1 message

Mon, Mar 23, 2020 at 12:43 PM To: All Staff

Here is what I sent to parents a short time ago:

This email is intended to provide you with an update on a number of things that we're working on:

Access to Buildings
We know that there is a need for some parents/students to get items from our schools. Here is a schedule as to when our buildings will be open and accessible:

All elementary buildings will be open Tuesday and Wednesday, March 24 and 25 from 3:00-6:00, or by appointment with the principal. They can be reached at _________. We ask that if at all possible, that parents only come into the building and that you practice social distancing.

The middle school will be open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, March 24-26 from 3:00-6:00 or by appointment. _____ can be reached by email at _______.

We ask that any student be accompanied by a parent.

High school by appointment only. Please contact _______ and ________.

School Work
Look for an email from _______ that will provide parents and students suggestions for activities and learning that can be done during this closure. You can expect that later today or early tomorrow. We will be communicating with our teachers during the week to identify more specific things that students can be doing related to their current coursework.

Devices
We know that not everyone has a computer at home for students to use. If that is the case and your child(ren) needs a device, please contact the principal [email email above].

Meals
Some have been wondering if the school will be serving lunch while we are closed. There are several regulatory challenges in doing so, but we are attempting to work through those to be able to do that. I know many of you are aware of other districts doing something in this area, but the rules are not the same for all districts depending upon their unique demographics. Stay tuned for more information.

Return to School
At this time the only thing we know for sure is that we will not be open prior to April 13. It is very possible that we do not come back then—we simply don't know. Once we do, we will be sure to let everyone know.

Activities
There will be no activities during the time we are closed. Anything scheduled for April 13 and beyond is currently still scheduled, but know that there is a likelihood that those things could be postponed or canceled.

As more details are worked out we will be sure to let you know. Be sure to follow all CDC and IDPH guidelines.
Good morning all,

This is strange times we're living in. Hopefully times that won't soon be repeated. I hope you and your family are well.

The administration has a plan of putting together resources that will be shared with our students. The first installment should have been shared yesterday. We will share another installment each of the next two weeks.

I am asking you three to meet with me via google hangout on WEDNESDAY morning at 10:30 am. I will send an invite for your calendar. Collectively we will brainstorm some resources that we can share with your students that is accessible to all. We are looking for resources that can be accessed by all students without cost and possibly without requiring parents to sign up for anything. This can be something that your students were working before break or something completely different. We are not giving them assignments and nothing we do will be graded. This is simply a resource for them to continue to work on their skills.

I look forward to seeing you at 10:30 on Wednesday. Have a great day and stay safe.
Since I don’t have classroom for all of my students, I decided to only invite my fifth period to begin with just to see whom I would get to respond. One question that I have is to those of you who have one, do you have different classrooms/different pages for each section, or do you have classes broken down under one big class?

“A loving, caring teacher took a liking to me. She noticed the potential and wanted to help shape it.”

I wanted all of you to know right away that the school closure proclamation has been extended through the end of April. I know that creates new questions, so we ask for your patience as we identify what that means. I am confident that the work we have done so far puts us into a good position to provide for our students as we move forward.

Stay tuned for details as we determine what this extension means for our students and for all of you.

---

A message to parents

Be aware that I sent the message below out to parents this morning.

Parents/Guardians,

As most of you are probably aware by now, Governor Kim Reynolds announced yesterday that schools will remain closed at least through the end of April. This does not come as a surprise, which is why our staff has already been working hard to put things in place to ensure that continuous learning opportunities will be provided for students during this closure.

Details regarding those continuous learning opportunities will come out soon from our district and from teachers. Much of that information will be provided later today and early next week.

There have been some questions raised in regards to high school students’ ability to earn credit and to be able to graduate. I can assure you that the closure should not negatively impact those issues, as long as students engage in the work that will be provided to them. It is our hope and expectation that the closure creates no negative consequences for any student.

We know this situation is far less than ideal for everyone. Despite that, I appreciate the support we have been given by all of you.

Again, look for more information to come to you and to students later today and early next week.
This email just went out to parents.

Begin forwarded message:

Dear parents,

The educational resources website has been updated with continuous learning materials for the upcoming week. While we provided a full week of activities for K-8 students, we are aware that Friday, April 10th was scheduled as a day off from school. Organize your week in the way that best fits your family, and don’t hesitate to contact teachers or administrators with questions. Middle and high school students should check their email daily, as teachers are communicating directly with them.

In addition, I want to share this document that describes how many internet service providers are making internet access more accessible to students during this time. Please note that there are low and no-cost options for families who qualify for free and reduced meals. Please reach out if you need qualification documentation from the district. We are happy to provide that.

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?ui=0&ik=80365c0c02&view=attachment&attid=0.166006525651551557&sim=0.166006525651551557
Staff Meeting Update

1 message

Tue, Apr 7, 2020 at 1:13 PM

Staff,

I know what you are thinking, “Really, is having a meeting when it is 70 degrees?” Yes, I should have looked at the weather. This will not be a long meeting, but important as we head into our next level of work.

You can access the meeting by going to your Google Calendar and selecting the event. You will see a Join Google Meet. Click on this to enter the meeting.

Before the meeting, please do the following:

1. Add google grid view: https://chrome.google.com/webstore/detail/google-meet-grid-view/bjkjkgjgdpjgjkljkjclkhkhjkljkl (if you can’t figure it out, then don’t worry).

2. Briefly review this document for today: Continuous Learning Schedule

3. When you sign in, please select video and audio. If you can’t or don’t want to use video, that’s fine. I know Penny Marlette wanted to know, because she was going to do her make-up.

4. Please mute your microphone. You can do this by moving the mouse to the bottom of the screen. You will see the microphone and you click it to turn it off.

5. In the upper right corner there will be a chat feature. Please put all questions here so I can answer them during the meeting. If you don’t want to ask a question, please feel free to email, call or text. Mrs. Wagner and Mr. Klamfoth may be available for district questions.

Finally, don’t get frustrated if something doesn’t work for you today. This will be my first big meeting so I am learning too. It will be great to see everyone!

2:30 we will start. Please log in around 2:25.

“As a welcoming school community, we strive to grow, learn and lead.”

“The primary purpose of education is to cultivate a better society, not merely reflect the current one.” – Todd Whisler
One new task I have been given is to create individualized learning boards for every student on my roster. This document will include a list of assignments from classroom teachers as well as additional tasks to support IEP goals. Further, I've been directed to include LINKS to appropriate sites such as Google Classroom. Here's my question for each of you:

**Are you using Google Classroom to send out assignments and tasks to students?** If so, that makes my job of providing a link easier. If not, we may need to talk.

Thanks!

I will use Google classroom but also big ideas. Students will be using IXL and student Desmos as well.

Everything will be pushed out through google classroom for me.

Jason L. Groth  
Social Studies Educator  
Waverly-Shell Rock Middle School

"We must see that every child has equal opportunity, not to become equal, but to become different — to realize the unique potential he or she possesses."

John Fischer
Bad news and good news

Fri, Apr 17, 11:26 AM

As many of you probably already know, Governor Reynolds just announced that we will not reopen this year. Be the bad news is that we will not get to see our students in person again this spring.

The good news is that we have prepared for this. The planning and efforts taken thus far will not need to be adjusted. Though not ideal, our students are already realizing the benefits of your work, and will continue to do so for the next several weeks.

Again, I thank all of you for your patience, your understanding, your support, and your efforts in making the best of a situation that none of us would have ever considered to be a possibility.

As we go forward I will be sure to let you know if other information becomes available.

Be well.

Website updated

Sat, Apr 18, 9:43 AM

The Educational Resources Website has been updated for the week of April 20th. I will be sending it to parents via email and posting it to the district Facebook page later this morning.

Thanks, again, for all your work—it gets a little smoother each week.

Student Celebrations

Tue, Apr 28, 10:16 AM

Hey Everyone,

I hope all of you are doing well and have been able to adjust to this new normal. The Student Celebration Committee has decided it would be great to continue to recognize students who are living out the 7 Habits, even during this virtual way of life!

We are asking if you would take some time to nominate a few students (the sooner the better!) who you feel have shown some of the 7 Habits during this closure! I have included the link at the end of the email.

We will be recognizing the April students next week, so please nominate a student or two!

We will also recognize students during the final week of school for May winners. All students will be recognized on our school Facebook page and will also receive a certificate.

Thanks so much!

Student Celebrations Committee

Student Celebrations Nomination Form

Week Reflection

Fri, May 1, 2:43 PM (11 days ago)

Keep up the great work! Thanks for being there for kids.

We will not have a staff meeting on Monday. However, we want to show our appreciation. Next week is Teacher Appreciation Week! We have something for everyone!

The plan is for you to do a “drive-by” on Monday from 9:00-10:00 at the middle school for your gift. We will be waiting for you in front of the school.

I hope you all can make it. If you can’t, we understand.

We miss watching you teach!

Be well,
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Pfw: May 4th Resources -
1 message

Sat, May 2, 2020 at 8:29 AM

This was sent to families this morning.

Begin forwarded message:

From: 
Subject: May 4th Resources -- A Message From 
Date: May 2, 2020 at 8:21 AM CDT
To: 
Reply-To: 

Good morning, families,

The Educational Resources website has been updated with new materials for the week of May 4th. There are a few specific notes I’d like to point out:

1. Elementary classrooms have posted a theme and topic for sharing for each week’s Google Meets for the remainder of the school year. These are the same for all grade levels and posted on each grade level’s webpage. This week’s theme is pajama party, and the sharing topic is a favorite book or movie.

2. Please remind your student(s) of acceptable and appropriate use of videoconferencing using school accounts. Our acceptable use policy only allows Google Meets to be used for school purposes. We encourage you to monitor your child’s use of videoconferencing to be sure it is being used in a responsible and safe manner.

3. The Newspaper is seeking middle and high school students who are interested in participating in a Journalism Academy to document life as a student during the COVID-19 Pandemic. If you have a student who would like more information about this opportunity, please contact [name] at

As always, don’t hesitate to reach out if you have questions, concerns, or needs.

Director of Educational Services
Hello all,

I will not be able to attend the meeting today. If you have any questions or needs that I may be able to help with, please let me know.

Have a great week.

---

Hey, the meeting link isn’t popping up on my google calendar. Could one of you send it to me?

[Deleted text hidden]

---

I went back to last week’s

[Deleted text hidden]

---
Teachers,

I sent the following letter to families today:

May 6, Update

You are not expected to clean out the lockers. We have individuals doing this now. The 7th and 8th will be done today. We will get 5th and 6th done by Friday.

If you have items in your room that belong to a student, please just keep them for now. We can worry about this later. If you believe they need it, then put it in their locker w/ a label. We will put it in their bag.

You will notice the pick up times. If you are cleaning your room during these hours, please stay in your room with the door shut. I anticipate kids wanting to engage in conversation if they see you.

If you have not signed up for a time to clean your room, please do so.

Sign Up

Be well,

--

“As a welcoming school community, we strive to grow, learn and lead.”

“The primary purpose of education is to cultivate a better society, not merely reflect the current one.” — Todd Whitaker
Having trouble viewing or submitting this form?

FILL OUT IN GOOGLE FORMS

We look forward to hearing from you as we continue to plan for the fall.

Hybrid Learning Setting Feedback

Use this form to provide feedback as we begin planning the details of our plan for a hybrid learning setting.

What is the one thing you want us to keep in mind as we plan?

What are two concerns you have?

What are the three most important questions you need to have answered?
Meeting in person

I was asked earlier if it is acceptable for staff to meet in person to work on planning for next year, and I wanted to seek some input before answering. You may choose to meet in person to work at school as long as there are fewer than 10 people together and you maintain six feet of physical distance.

8th Chromabook Update

FYL, we are aware of the communication for 8th grade Chromebook turn-ins. We sent the following message. This means you will need to hold your 8th grade virtual end of the year ceremony. Sorry for the confusion!

8th grade students and parents,

Please plan to return your chromebooks and chargers on Thursday, May 14th or Friday, May 15th.

In order to serve you as quickly as possible please plan on the following times either day:

- Last names A-F, please plan for 11:00 a.m.
- Last names G-O, please plan for 12:00 p.m.
- Last names P-Z, please plan for 1:00 p.m.

Please line up in your vehicle in the bus parking lot in front of the High School from west to east. Please stay in your vehicle.

You must fill out the Google Form "since Turning in Your Chromebook" before returning your chromebook. Please click the link...
Fwd: Final Week of Home Resources -- A Message From:

This message was sent to families this morning.

Begin forwarded message:

Good morning, families,

The Educational Resources website has been updated for the final week of the 2019-2020 school year. This was not the end of the year any of us expected to have, and we appreciate your partnership to make this a manageable and positive experience. We are now shifting our focus to plan for the 2020-2021 school year. While we are preparing for alternatives if circumstances require that we use them, it is our goal to start the year on August 24th with all of our students back where they belong - in our schools, with our teachers and support staff. Have a great summer! We can't wait to see you again!
An email to parents

1 message

Wed, May 27, 2020 at 2:23 PM

I know many of you don't have children in school here, so you wouldn't receive emails sent to them. So I wanted to share a copy of one I sent out earlier today. Here is what I sent:

As the school year officially winds down, I wanted to take a moment to thank all parents and students for your patience, cooperation and understanding as we have dealt with the extended school closure. We know that it has not been easy, and we hope that we don't have to do this again. However, the reality is that the upcoming school year may look different than a "normal" year.

With that knowledge we are in the process of developing a plan for next year that consists multiple scenarios. One of those is the ideal situation, with all students and staff back in our classrooms. We will be relying heavily on advice and guidance from public health and the Centers for Disease Control as we consider things that need to be in place in order for everyone to be back in class.

If the circumstances are such that requires all students stay at home for remote learning, it will look a little different than it did this year. The primary difference is that all learning in all grades will be required, so expectations will likely be higher.

There is also the possibility for a hybrid model where we limit the number of students who attend school in person at any one time. We have always to go before the details of this sort of arrangement would be developed, but it does provide us with a way to limit exposure and allow for physical spacing in our schools. To make this happen, we're considering having half of our students attend school every other week, keeping family groups, regardless of grade levels, on the same schedule. We don't see this as a long-term solution, but perhaps a transition if we are forced to move slowly back to having all students together.

Whatever environment we implement, it will be based on data made available to us from state and local health officials. And any of the options other than face-to-face for all students would not be entered into lightly and without an obvious need to do so.

I've asked regularly what I think school will look like on August 24, and if we'll be back to "normal." My response is that I simply don't know, and may not know right up until a week or two prior to our scheduled start. But I do know that all of us are hoping that on August 24 we are able to welcome every one of our students back into our schools to learn alongside their peers.

Again, thank you so very much for your support these last ten or so weeks. I hope you are all well, and stay that way.

https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0?tab=wm&ogbl#c/on6oXhOuXcGf5sY6RrK6chrela0-lOfispyx9ux-
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Documents Within Emails

Good morning. Welcome back from what has been a truly unusual spring break. I hope you are all taking care of yourselves, taking care of your families, and following all recommendations for addressing this pandemic. Please stay on top of your email and expect to be available for Zoom meetings with at least 24 hours notice over the next three weeks.

I want to communicate how we plan to handle the next three weeks, which is the timeframe that covers the remainder of the four-week school closure recommended by Governor Reynolds. We will be taking this in weekly segments. The goals of each of the next three weeks are:

- Week of March 23: Provide generic schedule for students and families and specific, task-oriented goals for teachers
- Week of March 30: Provide specific schedule for students and establish teacher collaboration to support ongoing student learning
- Week of April 6: Either begin planning for transition back to school for a successful remainder of the school year OR begin planning for ongoing school closure

To frame this, I want to start by reflecting on some things we believe:

- Learning happens in many ways— not just at school, and not just related to academics. We have an opportunity here to break down the boundaries of our traditions and typical constraints.
- Connection matters. Follow social distancing rules, but find ways to connect with your friends, your families, your colleagues, and your students. A phone call or a free Google account will take you a long way.
- Rest is an ingredient. Take care of yourself and take care of others, so we can all get to the other side of this quickly and in a better place than we started.
- We care about you, and we are here to help you get through this. Please reach out with your questions, concerns, and needs.

Today I will be sending families a generic outline of what a structured day for elementary, middle, and high school students might look like. I will share it with you as well. There are no expectations for families during this time; this is simply a resource for families who are seeking one.

This week we will begin creating a more specific outline for each grade level and content area that will be shared next week, in support of a more structured and purposeful week of learning. Expect teachers and administrators to be reaching out to you to help create next week’s documents.

For this week, please work through this list:

1. Go through your roster(s) and identify any students you are concerned about during this disruption. This may be due to home environment, food insecurity, trauma or mental health concerns, etc. Reach out to the parents of these students to your principal, so we can make direct contact with those families.
April 9, 2020

Dear parents,

We have received a waiver from the Iowa Department of Education to move into the next phase of continuous learning. Based on this approval, we will not be required to make up any instructional days lost to school closure. While we will officially enact our plans on Monday, April 13th, we have been deliberately transitioning in this direction over the past three weeks. The resources you have become familiar with will continue into this next phase with some specific additions at each level. These changes are currently in place through April 30th.

At the high school level, we will be transitioning to required continuous learning. This will allow students to continue learning essential concepts and skills in courses and progress to earn credits as planned this semester. Teachers will continue to communicate directly with students. Students will be expected to attend class once a week during their regularly scheduled class time through videconeference. Additionally, teachers will be available daily through videconeferencing, email, and phone at a scheduled time to provide student support. This is a different environment than what our students are used to, so please consider these helpful tips. Above all, communicate any challenges and needs arise. We are in this together and are committed to succeeding together.

At the elementary and middle levels, we will not be introducing any new learning, but rather providing daily support focused on maintaining skills and healthy learning habits. With every family engaging at home, we are confident we can mitigate concerns related to equity and access and keep all our students in a position to be successful when we return to school. Special education teachers will continue to support individualized access to resources, auxiliary supports, such as TAG and Title I, will also begin providing student support at this time.

In addition to continuing to provide weekly choice boards, elementary teachers will begin sending daily videos and identifying priorities for learning and skill practice that families should support at home. These will again use a combination of high quality tech-based resources and unplugged learning activities. Students should submit their work for the priority learning, and teachers will provide feedback. If you would like us to print linked resources for you, please let me know by the end of the day Friday. Based on current legal guidance, we do not plan to engage through videconeference with elementary students at this time, but that may change if the school closure is extended beyond April 30th.

Middle school teachers will communicate directly with students through Google Classroom. Using a modified schedule, students will receive video instruction from a limited number of teachers each morning. While students are expected to watch these videos and complete the assigned tasks, they may do so at any time during the day. Teachers will also be available on a specified schedule that will be sent to families to provide student support via videconeference, email, and phone. Students should submit work, and teachers will provide feedback.

Know that we want to be of assistance to you and are committed to providing the support all families need to access and engage during this time. Don’t hesitate to reach out to me at

Sincerely,
April 9, 2020

Dear McCormick School Families,

We hope you are doing well. If you have any questions, please reach out to me at [email address]. It is our goal to support each student and family during this time.

Here is an update for April 13-19. We will begin next week with the following schedule:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Language Arts/Literacy</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Language Arts/Literacy</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/STEM/TA/AS</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal/Instrumental Music</td>
<td>School Counselor Support</td>
<td>School Counselor Support</td>
<td>School Counselor Support</td>
<td>School Counselor Support</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The designated days are for teachers to communicate information in a pre-recorded video via Google Classroom prior to 9:00 a.m. The purpose of our continuous learning plan is for students to do the work. Each family situation is different and we respect your current reality. We are here to provide support to all students. The Guidance Support will be strategies to support daily schedules.

Each teacher will have a Google Meet set time for students for 30 minutes. These times will be communicated by teachers. These opportunities are ways for kids to get live feedback from their teachers. Please respond to the Google Meet Parental Form. This allows us permission for your child to participate in the Google Meet.

We are allowing families to get their Chromebooks at the school. Please email me if you wish to pick up that device.
I will be providing a more detailed video for students and families on Sunday, April 12 @ 7:00 p.m. to prepare students and parents.

Everything we are providing is an obligation to our school community to engage students in maintaining skills. We are dedicated to giving each student the opportunity to engage in learning each day.

Sincerely,
Teachers,

I can’t thank you enough for your efforts to create resources that provide the “just right” balance for families during this second week of school closure. While we are still waiting on a definitive answer from the governor’s office, I’m operating with the assumption that our school closure will likely continue through the end of April to match federal guidelines.

We will still go into week three with the same goal we set earlier – to either provide a successful transition back to school or to prepare for a continued closure. There are three specific tasks we will be asking you to complete for next week. For consistency, we will be pushing these out on Monday next week.

First, we will be asking you to revisit your resource documents from last week to update anything that needs to be updated. I’d ask that you keep resources the same if they are still appropriate to support continuity for families. Please also consider “unplugged” resources that can support content area learning without technology. The guidance we shared with families included the following time recommendations:

As you support learning at home, consider the following recommendations for structured learning activities. We encourage you to take advantage of this flexibility to support play and exploration as well:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade Range</th>
<th>Minimum Learning Time</th>
<th>Maximum Learning Time</th>
<th>Length of Engaged Attention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>20 minutes/day</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>3-5 minute blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>30 minutes/day</td>
<td>90 minutes/day</td>
<td>3-5 minute blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st - 3rd</td>
<td>45 minutes/day</td>
<td>90 minutes/day</td>
<td>5-10 minute blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th - 6th</td>
<td>60 minutes/day</td>
<td>120 minutes/day</td>
<td>10-15 minute blocks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7th - 12th</td>
<td>Per course: 15 min/day Total: 90 min/day</td>
<td>Per course: 30 min/day Total: 180 min/day</td>
<td>1 content area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th - 12th</td>
<td>Per course: 20 min/day Total: 120 min/day</td>
<td>Per course: 45 min/day Total: 270 min/day</td>
<td>1 course</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second task will be to create a short video of yourself that you can send to parents and/or students. The primary purpose of this is to help prepare all of you for the likelihood of an ongoing school closure and a transition to a continuous learning delivery method. We will
Monday, April 13th through Thursday, April 30th

Guiding Principles
- Everyone is doing the best they know how.
- We’re all learning as we go. There isn’t a “right way” to do this.
- Lead with kindness and deference to kids and families.
- We will all get through this together.
- Ask for support! We have plenty of “experts” to support your own learning.

Teacher Collaboration
- Attend weekly staff meetings via Meet (Mondays @ 10:00).
- Attend weekly grade level or content area team meetings via Google Meet at a regularly scheduled time limit meetings to 60 minutes.
- You can use your PLC minutes document for collaboration.
- Check email at least twice daily – once toward the beginning of the contract day and once toward the end of the contract day
- Be available to meet virtually during the contract day with at least 24 hours notice.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Monday</th>
<th>Tuesday</th>
<th>Wednesday</th>
<th>Thursday</th>
<th>Friday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Language Arts</td>
<td>Math</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Art/STEM/Tag</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal/Instrumental Music</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Delivery of Curriculum
- Information needs to be posted by 9:00 a.m. on the designated day of delivery.
- Focus on maintaining priority skills/knowledge and encouraging healthy learning habits - no new learning can be introduced
  - Grade level and department teams agree on priority content. Be on the same page with your colleagues.
  - Try to balance tech-based and unplugged learning experiences
  - Adhere to guidelines for Face Use
- All communication will happen through Google Classroom - consider how it can be done without internet access.
# General Tips for Teaching with Tech

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Tips</th>
<th>Links</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Google Meet   | Can be used to create and record videos as well as **meet** with a group. Be aware of lighting, background, camera position, and microphone. Mute yourself and others when not participating.                  | [Google extension](#)  
[Tips when using distance learning: Meet in particular](#)  
[Privacy on Meet](#)  
[Meet tutorial](#)                                                                          |
| Google Classroom | Please make it clear to students that we are not grading anything at this point, even if you create it as an assignment. If you want students to be able to respond with media, choose Assignment format. Discussions use the Question format.  
Parents can be invited to view the class, and they control the frequency and type of notification. | [How to link and share video on Google Classroom](#)                  |
| Loom          | Loom can be used to create videos with or without your image while visiting sites, or just your Chromebook camera view. Videos created can be linked to email, or used within Google Classroom. User friendly interface. | [Loom Extension](#)                                                  |
| Padlet        | A bulletin board like interface where students can post and interact with teacher approval.                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                      |
| https://webcameralive.com | Website to make a camera view video. Downloads directly into Drive.                                                                                                                                                                              | [Tutorial](#)                                                      |
| See-Saw       | Recommended for K-2 student and parent communication. Be aware that parent communication settings can be changed on the teacher side to view only their student's work. Check your settings.                                                                 | [Tips and Tutorial](#)                                              |
| YouTube       | If you are using Youtube, remember that you must approve videos for WSF. Please make videos                                                                                                                                  |                                                                      |
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

7 Tips for Remote Teaching

1. **Grading**: Feedback, not grades
   - Old school rules: Don’t do it?
2. **Social-Emotional Learning**
   - Lead with love, not lessons
   - Curriculum with core
   - Are you ok?
3. **Minimize synchronous online meetings**
   - Be mindful of different needs (times, availability)
4. **Not one size fits all**
   - Modifications may be needed
   - Equitable access of computers/internet assumed
5. **Offer grace**
   - Deadlines = aspirational
   - Assume best students
   - Integrate parents
   - Self
6. **Keep it simple**
   - 2-3 sentence instructions max!
   - Start with a plan in place
7. **Individual conversation**
   - Office hours, video chats as possible, if possible

---

Wendi Pillars @wendipillars
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

I don't know about you but I'm kinda over cooking. I have talked with others that are looking for quick lunch ideas, dinner recipes (that are not fancy, simple ingredients, healthy-sometimes, etc). Also, my book supply is running low and I need new titles to order online! I miss all of you! Remember that you can get audio and ebooks free on the Libby APP from the

Please invite anyone that you think would benefit from this document.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Books</th>
<th>Quick Lunch Ideas</th>
<th>Recipes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Where the Crawdads Sing</td>
<td>Leftovers (LOL)</td>
<td>Keto reuben in a bowl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Light We Lost</td>
<td>Soup/Salad</td>
<td>BLT avocado chicken salad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Between Shades of Gray</td>
<td>Lunchmeat; cheese, &amp; nuts</td>
<td>smoke-roast-minced-pork-pot-meat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educated</td>
<td>Croissants/ham/cheese rolls</td>
<td>Let me get back to you....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Silent Patient</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Nightingale</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Winter Garden (Kristin Hannah is the best AHA)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mrs. Everything</td>
<td>Crack An Egg</td>
<td>Many of my recipes come from eMeals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hungry Heart</td>
<td>Popcorn</td>
<td>and All Recipes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shortest Way Home</td>
<td>Leftovers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Woman in Caben '10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>We Were The Lucky Ones</td>
<td>Mixed Green Salad w' grilled chicken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine: A Novel</td>
<td>Tortilla pizzastFien</td>
<td>Slow Cooker Cilantro Lime Chicken</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Origin: Dan Brown</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Truly Madly Guilty</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A Man Called Ove</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Girl With the Dragon Tattoo Series</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Americas Dirt</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dear Evan Hansen</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Educated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Open and Shut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Allison has been cooking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>EVERYTHING out of Chrissy Teigen's</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>cookbook Grannys: Hungry for More</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Dear Middle School Families,

We hope you are doing well! If your family needs anything, please reach out to me at
It is our goal to support each student and family during this time.

Thank you for engaging your child in our continuous learning plan. Our school appreciates the response from students. We need to update you on our plans for returning items to students. We also want to collect items from students.

**May 4-5 Locker Clean Out**
All personal items will be placed in a bag and labeled by student name. This will be done by our staff. The bag will be in front of their locker. Any school books or supplies will be kept and returned to the designated location.

**May 11-22 Student Pick Up**

a. Students may come to the school to pick up their bag between 8:00 am - 6:00 pm Monday thru Thursday, 8:00 - 12:00 on Friday. We will only allow 10 students in the building at one time.

b. Any 7th grade student with items in the PE locker room will be asked to get these items themselves. We will provide a garbage bag for them to collect their items. School issued equipment (uniforms, jerseys and/or football equipment) can remain in the locker.

We will not be collecting Chromebooks. It is important that you keep these devices in a storage location that protects them during the summer. Our technology team will update Chromebooks once we return to school. If your device needs repair during the summer, we will collect it at the middle school and return it in the fall of 2020. If you would rather return the Chromebook, then you may return it to the school. We will have a location inside the main entrance for those returning their Chromebooks. Email for more information.

If you have school issued items, we ask that you place them inside the main doors. This would include school books and athletic uniforms. Any items still in our possession after May 22 will be stored in the main office. These bags will be available for pick up in the Main Office from May 26-June 5 via appointment.

Sincerely,

**Mission Statement:**
"To create a passion for learning that will sustain students for a lifetime."

**Vision Statement:**
"Through a culture of collaboration, imagination, and determination, we pursue excellence."
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

Last Week May 2020

**Student Activities**
Unplugged - Be creative - Pictures or Videos
Nothing is required for students to hand in or submit the last week.
Might choose to share recommendations for activities for students to do over the summer.
Google Meets on Tuesday and Wednesday are optional for teachers to host.
*Do what makes sense for your situation. If the focus is on the relationships, then continue.

**Monday, May 25th**
Memorial Day - No School

**Tuesday, May 26th**
Social Studies and Literacy post activity.
*Exploratory/Specials post activity on Tuesday or Wednesday

**Wednesday, May 27th**
Science and Math post activity.
*Exploratory/Specials post activity on Tuesday or Wednesday

**Thursday, May 28th (Farewell Message)**
Students' Last Day
Goal: Be thankful to be a
5th/6th Collaborate with switch teacher for a Google Meet with students - together or with homerooms
7th/8th Collaborate as a Team for a Google Meet with students - split up students amongst team
*Exploratory/Specials combined messages

**Friday, May 29th**
Half Day PD for Teachers
Plan for 8-11:30
*Work in Department/Content Teams
*Essential Learning = Promote Standards

**Teaching Possibilities**
1. School
2. Home
3. Both

**Assessment Possibilities**
1. School
2. Home
3. Both

**How much do I plan?**
1. 2 weeks
2. 4 weeks
3. 6 weeks
MS End of Year PD

Friday, May 20th
8:00-11:30am

1. Google Meet Links:
   Side Chat: What is something you are looking forward to this summer?

2. Celebrations

3. Schedule
   8:00-8:30 Staff Meeting
   8:30-10:30 PLC Team Meetings
   8:30-9:30 Teacher Association Meeting
   11:30-11:45 All Staff Meeting Wrap-Up

4. PLC Team Meetings (On-site, remote, different location... your choice. Invite):
   a. Gear: Prepare for the beginning of the school year in all three types of learning (On-Site, Hybrid, Continuous)
      *The critical skills that students need to know and are able to do as a result of unit of study.
      Focus on what a student can do with content (skills) vs the content itself. What level (DOK) of learning is happening?
      b. Reminder from Tuesday: PLC Questions (p.s. #2, #3 & #4)
         i. Do we know (promis standards) what students need to know?
            1. What are your SUPER PROMISE STANDARDS in 50/30 and/or virtual needs?
         ii. Do we know (promis standards) how we will assess (common formative assessment, GPA)? What students need to know?
            1. Can you use these assessments in all 3 modes?
            2. Do you need to modify assessments for modes?
         iii. Do we know how we can support learning (Interventions, WIN, FLEX, Virtual Sessions) for those who don’t know it?
            1. What does this look like for teacher teams?
         iv. Do we have a plan for extended learning/mentoring?
            1. Are we matching or giving more work? What resources are we missing? Can students go above the written DOK standard?
   c. Previous Work
      i. The PLC folder should have copies of your work.
      ii. The table of Standards guides unpacking the standards.
   d. Tool to Support Return to Learn planning (Just like students we want to give you the opportunity to customize to best fit your needs or create your own.)

2021-2022 P-8 Planning Guide

1. Purpose: A place to provide evidence of your current thinking. Allows us to have something to work with:
   Planning Guide (UNEDITED CONTENT) in place for the fall.
2. Make a copy and place it respective PLC folder
3. Modify row/columns to fit your needs
Autoethnography on Teaching During a Pandemic

2020-2021 WSR Planning Guide

Grade Level(s): 7
Content(s): Science
Links to Additional Content/Grade Level(s):

Links to Support Documents:
- Science PLC Team Agenda
- OpenSciEd Website
- Unit 1: Metabolic Reactions
- Unit 2: Water Cycling/Photosynthesis
- Unit 3: Forces at a Distance

Two Week Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 24 - September 4</th>
<th>September 7 - 18</th>
<th>September 21 - October 2</th>
<th>October 5 - 16</th>
<th>October 19 - 26</th>
<th>November 2 - 13</th>
<th>November 16 - 24</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 30 - December 11</td>
<td>December 14 - 22</td>
<td>January 4 - 15</td>
<td>January 18 - 29</td>
<td>February 1 - 12</td>
<td>February 15 - 28</td>
<td>March 1 - 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 22 - April 2</td>
<td>April 5 - 10</td>
<td>April 15 - 30</td>
<td>May 3 - 14</td>
<td>May 17 - 20</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dates: August 24 - September 4
Any Special Notes:
- 2:30 Dismissal August 24-27 (Intake Conferences)
- 12:30 Dismissal August 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomena</th>
<th>Quantities Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-Site Learning</td>
<td>Hybrid Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do things inside our bodies work together to make us feel the way we do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS-LS1-7: Develop a model to describe how food is rearranged through chemical reactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomena</th>
<th>Quantities Covered</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On-Site Learning</td>
<td>Hybrid Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do things inside our bodies work together to make us feel the way we do?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS-LS1-7: Develop a model to describe how food is rearranged through chemical reactions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2020-2021 WSR Planning Guide

Grade Level(s): 8
Content(s): Science
Links to Additional Content/Grade Level(s):

Links to Support Documents:
- Science PLC Team Agenda
- OpenSciEd Website
- Unit 1: Sound
- Unit 2: Weather
- Unit 3: Contact Forces - not out yet/Fall 2020

Two Week Planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>August 24 - September 4</th>
<th>November 30 - December 11</th>
<th>March 22 - April 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 7 - 18</td>
<td>December 14 - 22</td>
<td>April 5 - 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 21 - October 2</td>
<td>January 3 - 15</td>
<td>April 15 - 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 5 - 10</td>
<td>January 18 - 29</td>
<td>May 3 - 14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 19 - 26</td>
<td>February 1 - 12</td>
<td>May 17 - 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2 - 13</td>
<td>February 15 - 26</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10 - 24</td>
<td>March 1 - 12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dates: August 24 - September 4

Any Special Notes:
- 2:30 Dismissal August 24-27 [intake conferences]
- 12:50 Dismissal August 29

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phenomenon Question</th>
<th>On-Site Learning</th>
<th>Hybrid Learning</th>
<th>Continuous Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How can a sound make something move?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Standards Covered
- MS-PS4-2
(Team Name)

"As a welcoming school community, we strive to grow, learn and lead."

I. Team Norms
   A. Agenda prior to the meeting
   B. Focused participation by all members
   C. Set and achieve goals focused on student learning
   D. Meeting adjourns with clear action steps for the next meeting
   E. 2:30-3:10 will be 7th-grade planning
   F. 3:10-3:45 will be 8th-grade planning

5/26/2020
   • Do we know (promise standards) what students need to know?
     ○ 7th Grade
       ■ Metabolic Reactions
         • How do things inside our bodies work together to make us feel the way we do?
           ▷ MS-LS1-7:
             ■ Develop a model to describe how food is rearranged through chemical reactions forming new molecules that support growth and/or release energy as this matter moves through an organism.
       ■ Matter Cycling/Photosynthesis
         • Where does food come from and where does it go next?
           ▷ MS-LS1-6:
             ■ Construct a scientific explanation based on evidence for the role of photosynthesis in the cycling of matter and flow of energy into and out of organisms.
       ■ Forces at a Distance
         • How can a magnet move another object without touching it?
           ▷ MS-PS2-3:
             ■ Ask questions about data to determine the factors that affect the strength of electric and magnetic forces.
     ○ 8th Grade
       ■ Sound
         • How can a sound make something move?
           ▷ MS-PS4-2: Develop and use a model to describe that waves are reflected, absorbed, or transmitted through various materials
       ■ Weather
Monday Meeting Notes

Monday, April 13, 2020 Staff Meeting

Monday, April 13, 2020

1. Question in Chat: What is your favorite Easter candy?

2. Celebrations

3. Continuous Learning Roll Out
   a. Infinite Campus and Facebook

4. Material Requests for classroom
   a. Table in foyer
   b. Let know

5. Google Meet - 531 Responses (All Yes)
   a. Communicate to students that this NOT required. “Support Session”
   b. Start with a brief, How are you doing activity?
      i. A high and a low
      ii. A rose and a thorn
      iii. Represent your week in an emoji or hashtag
      iv. Share how you are doing in the form of a weather pattern or forecast
      v. Fist to five (fist being a ranking of zero, up to all five fingers) on how you are doing and explain why
   c. You can be in the session with one kid. You can record if you are concerned, not required.
   d. Wait until all kids are out before out before you close
   e. Set up protocols for discussions
      i. All mics muted, round robin responses, draw a name, etc.
   f. Associates are expected to participate in classes (not all)

6. No Response Document
   a. Narrow your focus to students of greatest concern

7. Professional Expectations & PLC Meetings
   a. Email accessibility
   b. Invite and respective Instructional Coaches to your meeting
   c. Keep meetings to 60 minutes.

“We can’t get out of it, so we might as well get into it.”
Monday, April 20, 2020  Staff Meeting

Monday, April 20, 2020

**Question of the Day in Google Chat: Fist to Five (1-low to 5-high) How are you doing?**

1. **Teacher Classroom Clean Out Schedule**

2. Locker Clean Out for Students
   * Currently waiting for CDC Guidelines to create schedule (late May or June)
   * Most likely after 4:00
   * Student Devices/Book Return/School Supplies
     * still developing a plan based on CDC Guidelines

3. Report Cards
   * We will post after the end of the year
   * Standards not addressed do typical practice (end at Trimester 2)

4. Continuous Learning Plans
   * Last Day of School is May 28 (Kids)
   * Last Day of School is May 29 (Staff)
     * Plan on meeting virtually at 10:00 a.m.
     * We are usually flexible so we can provide ‘fun’ options for kids towards the end of May

5. **No Response**
   * Focus is on ‘those who need us the most’
   * Help ‘clean up’ the list if you have engaged w/ students

Monday, April 27, 2020  Staff Meeting

Monday, April 27, 2020
Question of the Day in Google Chat: Do you prefer a wood fire or a gas fire? What is your favorite ‘campfire’ snack?

1. **Teacher Classroom Clean Out Schedule**

2. **Plan for Locker Cleanouts**
   a. Bag each student's belongings and label

3. **Focus on Relationships**
   a. SEL drives Google Meets, Content Delivery, Learning

4. **Future Work**
   a. Measurable Results Assessment (MRA)
   b. Needs Assessment (Values)
   c. Rosters
   d. Schedules

**ONE WAY TO KEEP MOMENTUM GOING IS TO HAVE CONSTANTLY GREATER GOALS.**

**Monday, May 11, 2020 Staff Meeting**

**Monday, May 11, 2020**

Side Chat: If you could take one faculty member to Mars, who would you take with you?

1. **Celebrations**

2. **Classroom Cleanout/Expectations**
   a. Do your best
   b. Let the custodians know if there is anything you need fixed
3. Report Card Statement: Due to COVID-19, no standards were assessed after March 13th. These reporting boxes have been left blank.

4. Last Week of School

Monday, May 18, 2020  Staff Meeting
Side Chat: What is your theme song for the day?

1. Celebrations

2. Simon Sinek: Change Mindset

3. Return to Learn: Mrs. Wagoner

4. May 29
   a. 8:00-11:30
Tuesday, May 26, 2020 Staff Meeting

Side Chat: What was the best food you consumed during the weekend?

1. Celebrations

2. End of Year Questions
   a. Test Site Reminder
   b. Classroom Cleanup
   c. Custodial Requests
   d. Materials/Supply Orders

3. 2020-2 CB 1 Schedules
   a. Go-Hawk Time
      i. Focus on positive relationships
      ii. Designed by Lead Teachers, Counselors, Admin, Inst Coaches
      iii. 5 SEL Competencies

**District Timelines**
   a. July 1
   b. August 1
   c. August 15

4. Friday, May 29 (On-site, remote, different location... your choice)
   a. 8:00-8:30 Staff Meeting
      i. Staff Send Off
      ii. Framework for PLC Team Meeting
   b. 8:30-11:30 PLC Team Meetings

*The critical skills that students need to know and are able to do as a result of unit of study. Focus on what a student can DO with content (skills) vs the content itself. What level (DOK) of learning is happening?
   i. 4 PLC Questions (#1, #2, #3 & #4)
1. Do we know (promise standards) what students need to know?
   a. What are your SUPER PROMISE STANDARDS in 50:50 and/or virtual model?
2. Do we know (promise standards) how we will assess (common formative assessment, CFA) what students need to know?
   a. Can you use these assessments in all 3 models?
   b. Do you need to modify assessments for models?
3. Do we know how we could support learning (Interventions, WIN, FLEX, Virtual Sessions) for those who don’t know it?
   a. What does this look like for teacher teams?
4. Do we have a plan for extended learning/enrichment?
   a. Are we enriching or giving more work? What resources are we missing? Can students go above the written DOK standard?

   ii. Each team set up own Google Meet
   iii. Invite (Mrs. Bass, Mrs. Wagoner, Mr. Langner, Mrs. Betts, Strategists)
   c. 8:30-9:30 Teacher Associate Meeting
   d. 11:30-11:45 All Staff Meeting Wrap Up (Same link for all staff meetings)