

Educating online helped me connect with students in new ways

Written by By Nora Sanford Educator at Destinations Career Academy of New Mexico
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In a virtual world, it can be hard to connect to students with learning disabilities, but I have learned to adapt and form real bonds with my students. I have been working in the education sector for around 30 years and started teaching virtually in 2020. With degrees in special education, interpreting for the deaf, and educational leadership, I did not expect to be working as a 2nd grade teacher at New Mexico Destinations Career Academy, but taking that position opened doors for me to learn a new avenue of communication with students online.

I love teaching virtually because it allows me to work my schedule into what works best for me. It takes a certain person with resilience to connect with students online; I learned to navigate interpersonal communication in new ways. Teachers can still be relational online and affirming of my students; they only need to have that drive to connect with students and display authenticity online.

To me, it's all about the details. When I remember the little things about my students; the likes, dislikes, special things, they feel heard and validated. When I notice a new haircut, or they got their braces taken off, connections are created beyond the classroom. Most people want to be heard, noticed, and acknowledged in some way. Whether they are students, parents or colleagues, the little things do matter.

I encourage students to do more and be more than they think is possible and I have found there is so much parent contact and communication in the online education world, which makes it

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easy to work together and find what best motivates students. As a parent of two students who completed high school at home, I have experience in motivating students who are working from home.

Educating online has been an incredible learning experience for me and I am grateful to be making a difference in the lives of students every day. I hope all students feel the support teachers like myself really try to display in virtual education.

By Nora Sanford
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