

I returned to teaching last year after taking a 5 year break to help raise our children and transition them to a new community. I accepted a job as Kindergarten teacher and found that both kindergarten teachers would be new to the grade level. As Covid struck our world, I found myself as a full time parent of two and full time teacher of 22 students/families. Lucky for me, our 2 children were self driven with their schooling and I could set them up on a device in between my new requirements. I had to purchase a laptop for my home and ensure lighting and the background were appropriate for each person getting on a google meet or zoom meeting. The internet at the school would not support my live meetings with the devices they offered, nor the connectivity strong enough to complete a 45 minute meeting, so I increased my internet at home as well. School moved into my home that was also under construction (little did I know, we'd all move back home and try learning). As I prepared paper packets, completed live meets, delivered packets, prepared an hour meeting with my students who were ready for lunch and continued to try connecting with families each week, I found it discouraging the number of families who found the pass/ incomplete grading unworthy for completing the school year. I also watched as the educational resources and expectations between the kindergarten classrooms became less and less equivalent as teacher expectations were vague. I wondered how many other grades were finding inconsistency in the expectations of their students.

The levels of education within even my classroom of kindergartners are more diverse this year. Those who participated in distant learning, even at a preschool level, are continually rising. Those who did not are continuing to suffer and their scores are consistently lower. As a kindergarten teacher, I didn't expect to see much effect from the closure and was mistaken. Students in kindergarten are less self motivated, have lower social skills and are starting behind. Penmanship is poor, and problem solving skills are lower.

My district only had 2.5 weeks of distant learning this year, thankfully. In those two weeks I was expected to be live with my class at 7:30 am. That meant I needed to start work by 7:15 in my home. My contract hours start at 7:45. My second live was during my lunch and I didn't finish my day until after contract hours. My own children struggled with completing their school work on computers as they worked with a new program and new expectations. As a teacher, I had no time to help them during the day and by evening, they were tired of being in front of a screen. Behaviors escalated at home and frustration levels rose. I am thankful we only had those short weeks.

Sena Raschio
Kindergarten teacher & parent of 2.