

Remote Learning In 2020-2021

In our Spring 2020 Newsletter we took an inside look at how remote learning in Ichabod Crane was going after schools closed. While Ichabod schools have reopened for in-person learning this year, there are still full remote learning students in all ICC schools and in-person grade 6-12 students still participate in remote learning for part of their week.

There were key differences and advantages for staff when preparing for remote learning in the 2020-2021 school year. There was far more time to prepare than last spring which meant there was time to ensure students had access to a remote learning device (Chromebooks or laptops) and had reliable internet connectivity. The District also prioritized ensuring faculty had powerful and up-to-date technology in order to best utilize instructional platforms to maximize the success of remote instruction. This year they have better means and tools to more effectively educate students through online learning platforms.

Increased professional development focused specifically on remote teaching also played a key role preparing staff this time around, with the district hosting multiple training opportunities over the summer. Partial motivation for the district's staggered reopening schedule was to have more Staff Development Days where teachers could further refine remote teaching skills and have added time to prepare remote curriculum and lessons. Finally, Ichabod is now working with a Remote Instructional Technology Specialist from Questar III whose main objective is to support staff with their remote teaching needs and leveraging technology to enhance instruction.

We asked three teachers to give a short testimonial about how the remote learning and teaching experience is going this year, as well as how it compares to last spring.

Katherine Gardner, *Full Remote Teacher for K & 1st Grade*

This year, I'm teaching Kindergarten and First Grade remotely. It's a lot of fun! There was a learning curve for caregivers and teachers at first but we've settled into an effective routine. I applaud the efforts of family members and educators as we navigate these new waters together.

Remote learning looks a lot different than it did last year when our profession completely changed overnight. This time, we were more prepared and experienced. We've had time to explore new programs and make structured schedules emulating a typical school day. In the Primary School we continued using the Seesaw platform since it's user friendly for young learners. I typically have Google Meets with students throughout the day and have follow-up activities for them in Seesaw.

Teaching takes creativity and keeping students engaged from behind the screen is important. For instance, we had a main character in a class story who was a cat, so the students wore cat ears and/or brought a cat stuffed animal to Read Aloud. We also have a Mystery Reader every Friday and give students clues to guess who is coming to read!

Susan Mallery, Full Remote Teacher for 4th Grade

Starting out was a little bumpy at first, but that was mostly because it was the first time many of the students had used Chromebooks and Google Classroom. It's a big transition from using Seesaw in the Primary School to Google Classroom in the Middle School. At this point, we've settled into a routine and we're all experts in Google Classroom.

Starting a new year remotely is so different for the students transitioning into the grade and Middle School. For instance, I went to a softball game and saw one of my students last weekend and it was the first time we met in person! Remote teaching is a little easier this year because of the experience from last spring and the preparation over this summer. I think the biggest difference from spring is the increased amount of time in live class meetings. I am in live meetings with students for most of the day and any students not in a particular meeting is expected to be working on assignments.

I'm using many different platforms and websites. We're having lots of fun with Jamboard, Bitmoji Classrooms, Kami and Google Breakout Rooms. I stick to the curriculum, but always make sure we're having fun with it. I have all my students together on Friday mornings for a big group meeting and a Fun Friday activity. We also do a Student of the Week slideshow on Fridays and we've even started Book Groups. It's a lot of work, but I love these kids!

Todd Megan, High School Earth Science Teacher*

**All HS teachers do some remote teaching and teach some full remote students.*

It's taken a little longer to settle into the groove this year. Every aspect, from meeting new students to grading, is different this year. I often consider my current routine for doing things, have a revelation and create a more efficient routine. All my students have rolled with these metaphorical punches so well, though. I think we tend to forget how resilient they can be and we're lucky to have these students.

Remote learning is a lot different this fall. Going into the pandemic last year, we already had deep connections with students; we knew how to communicate with and reach each student. This year we're meeting some students for the first time so all the staff are working hard to form new connections, but sometimes it's tough with less face-to-face time. It's a challenge for us teachers but we're readjusting many skills that have served us well in the past to meet it.

Effective remote learning tools include some well thought-out hardware. For me, that means whole room microphones, fast PC's and hardware interconnections. How can I draw a model and have the students at home and in person see and interact with it? I tackled those questions early on to ensure a smooth start to learning in my classroom. My students create class-wide brainstorming on Jamboard and then each student makes their own project on Google Slides using the Jamboard as a source. Also, teamwork has always been a big part of my classroom environment and that's been made easier with Google Meet Breakout Rooms.

