

Can K – 3 Students Thrive When Distance Learning?

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Most of California's K – 3 students were forced to start their school year as distance learners these last few weeks. And many parents panicked as they had to determine how they would support this challenge with technology oversight and support. Those who had the time or money, scrabbled to find programs that would allow their children to socialize with others in small groups and in neighborhood pods. Rotating parents provide supervision and tutors would be hired for added help. Many parents struggled. Their needs for childcare or while working were overwhelming to adequately support some children's needs.

As we visited various learning settings, we observed the following success stories:

Our transitional kindergarten twins, Anna and Maria, are thriving because their teacher has adopted a Mr. Rodgers personality of being passionate about lesson delivery from afar. The girls sing, dance, and complete performing arts activities while learning prereading skills, number concepts, shapes, colors, and how to be effective community helpers and scientists. They are excited about their learning and share many of their activities with their extended family when visiting in-person and online during family Zoom phone calls.

When teaching primary grades, we are creating units of study that help children apply classroom learning to their daily lives. For example, bay area schools began the school year during California's wild fires. During our writing time, we talked about how wild fires start from extreme weather conditions. Students learned how to read the Air Quality Index to determine when they could play outside during incremental good air times while hazardous smoke conditions lingered in nearby communities. We created reflective writing activities where students could apply their learning to other facts they had previously learned about weather and health. Then we encouraged students to talk with their families about what they learned during these reflective lessons. Other students learned to work effectively in small groups while completing reading and math assignments through neighborhood pods. Some students participated in a pod with other classmates. Others partnered with students from other grade levels. Older students could guide younger students in completing their assignments. It was challenging when students had

different schedules and breaks.

When parents ban together to support each other during these difficult times, many are able to help each other with various parenting challenges and concerns. While one parent is confident with reinforcing basic math skills, another is helpful with the reading and writing assignments. When schools finally open for student attendance, many parents will have acquired lifelong tutorial support skills to help each of their children's unique learning styles.

Much patience and success!

Mary Ann

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