

➤ Story #1 (Elementary):

It started out okay - fifteen 2nd graders in person and ten remote was possible to keep up with. We were learning how to use all of our technology and doing well in both groups. A few had issues with staying masked indoors, but they were not defiant. Then, on day #4, I get an updated transportation paper which shows I will have nineteen in person students and six remote starting on Monday. Nobody told me or warned me—just the paper from transportation. So I now have four more students who will not be familiar with procedures coming in on Monday. I pulled in four more places for them to sit, but now we are only 2 ft away from each other with absolutely no extra space at all. I have taught thirty-four years and still love it, but this year is doing me in! I do not want to get sick because of my job. I am no longer safe, though, with this many students in a very small, older classroom. I am upset that the school did not set cutoff numbers for classrooms based on actual, usable square footage. I am very upset, and as of now I still deciding if I really want to stay in this district. I'm seriously considering retirement at this point.

➤ Story #2 (Elementary):

I'm usually not one to complain to others outside my husband and closest friends, but I feel like my voice should be heard. Like hundreds of others, I am feeling completely drained, overwhelmed, and frustrated, and it's only the fourth day of school. I'm always one to put in extra hours, take work home (and expect some extra work at the beginning of the year), but my current workload is ridiculous!! I haven't left school before 6:30 the last two weeks, I'm still taking work home in the evenings; I went into school to record lessons on Saturday, I spent countless hours over the weekend and each evening trying to prepare for my 14 in-person and 10 remote students. Despite all of my attempts to try and get ahead, I can't! I am drowning! It is all I can do to get tomorrow's lessons on the LMS, let alone plan for Thursday and Friday, or next week. This is not sustainable!!

I cannot wrap my head around how I am supposed to teach small groups on Zoom with my remote kids, and still keep my in-person six and seven year olds engaged. I decided to make this week a practice for how remote activities might work, by making it "easy" with simple "Getting to Know You" type Zooms. I gave up my special for my first one, in which I had four kids logging in 20 - 30 minutes late and two not trying at all. Although, a few of the parents are very supportive and are sincerely trying their best, one parent (who was inappropriately dressed) walked back and forth in the background numerous times, and another had a houseful of family making noise in the background while the student was supposed to be speaking. Another student, who isn't even assigned to my class, accidentally logged into my Zoom instead of my teaching partner's Zoom. He and his mother didn't even realize I wasn't the correct teacher.

On Tuesday, I tried offering another Zoom for Q&A during recess. I had planned ahead by having my class already lined up. I was logged in and ready to open my Zoom, but my assistant had not arrived to take my in-person kids. I proceeded to open the Zoom, thinking she would arrive any minute, and I would just get on and say hello. Meanwhile, she ended up being absent, and there was no communication that she wasn't going to be at work. I ended up spending the next 15+ minutes holding my computer and Zooming with remote students while monitoring the recess line, and I also had two custodial interruptions for bathroom necessities (we were currently out of toilet paper and our classroom bathroom is the only one my students are allowed to use due to COVID restrictions).

All things considered, my students actually did very well, but I felt embarrassed in front of the remote parents, because it must have looked like I was running a three-ring circus, even though none of that was my fault! I think that is why all of this is so hard. It is not our fault. We care about our students and are trying so hard to build relationships. We know how important it is to start the year off right, yet nothing about this is good for anyone! This workload is unmanageable and unsustainable!!

➤ Story #3 (Secondary):

Decision made today: retirement.