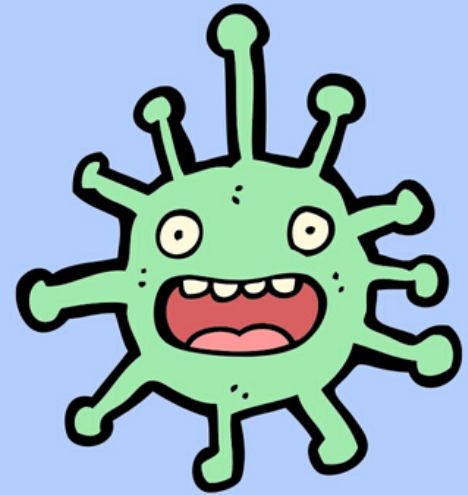


HOW TO EXPLAIN COVID-19 TO YOUR STUDENTS?

CONNECTING STUDENTS TO KNOWLEDGE

HELLO,
I'M A VIRUS AND
MY NAME IS
COVID-19



While concern about COVID-19 can make children and families anxious, teachers play an important role in sharing appropriate information.

AT A TIME FULL OF UNCERTAINTY, HOW SHOULD WE ANSWER CHILDREN'S QUESTIONS?

The world is in turmoil - hundreds of schools are closed, thousands of flights cancelled, millions of people self-isolated at home. Despite that, we are trying to maintain a veneer of normalcy in our days. But there's one word that doesn't seem to go away in these times: COVID-19.

News of this new virus is everywhere, and we can't help but talk about it. At a time full of uncertainty, how can adults honestly and appropriately explain COVID-19 to children?

While concern about COVID-19 can make children and families anxious, teachers play an important role in sharing appropriate information. Talking with children about their fears, teaching them positive preventive measures, and giving them a sense of control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

How can you, as a teacher, can answer your student's questions? Here are some strategies that might help you on this mission:

- Remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents or teachers seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. For that reason, it is important to remain calm and reassuring.
- Don't be afraid to discuss what's happening. Maybe you don't have the answers to all the questions but not talking about something can make children worry even more. By talking to your students, you have the opportunity to share fact-based information that is likely more reassuring than whatever they're hearing on the news or from their friends.
- Ask your students what they know about COVID-19 or what they have heard about it. Ask them questions such as "Have you heard people talking about a new virus? What worries do you have about it? Did you talk to your parents about this?" This is a good opportunity for you to correct any misinformation, measure their level of anxiety and provide them with emotional support.
- Make yourself available and encourage students to communicate, ask questions and express their feelings and concerns. Remind them that it is OK to feel scared, anxious or nervous and that you will keep them updated as you learn more.
- Encourage students to practice basic hygiene such as washing their hands frequently, and leading a healthy lifestyle – they should eat a balanced diet, exercise regularly and get enough sleep. Giving children guidance on what they can do to help them develop a strong immune system and prevent infection gives them a sense of control over disease.
- Reassure students that right now, there are many adults who are dedicated to keeping them safe: doctors are in hospitals taking care of patients, scientists are working to create a vaccine, teachers and family are ensuring that all measures are being taken to keep them healthy.
- Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible: Probably you are teaching from home and you and your students are still getting used to this new situation. But try to keep a regular schedule as much as possible and maintain the routines they had in the classroom. Routines will help students to feel busy and safer.
- Remind your students to be selective with the news they read. Many stories on the internet are based on rumors and inaccurate information. They should prioritize information obtained from official sources such as World Health Organization.

Throughout history, Humanity has overcome difficult times. The world is united to face a common enemy. As a teacher, you may feel like you're experiencing the most challenging moment of your career, but the truth is, you have never been so needed.

Together, we will continue Connecting Students to Knowledge worldwide!

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