

Each week the MES PTA will interview a member of our community with questions specific to these unprecedented times. This week we are visiting with Pete Rosenberg, one of our multi-talented second grade teachers at OHES. He also plays an active role in the SOAR (Student Opportunities for Academics and Recreation) program, helping students discover their publishing potential with summertime journalism projects and other creative works.

PIR: Hi Pete! Thanks for visiting with us! We know you are busy and appreciate your time. Teachers have been the front line, the reserves and everything in between this year. How are you and your class doing so far?

My co-teacher, Mrs. Cooper, and I are working and learning with a really terrific crew of students this year in our 2R/C class! Negotiating the Seesaw platform, juggling the hybrid and remote schedules, and making sure everyone is being extra safe with the health protocols certainly makes this year extraordinarily unique. We are finding creative ways to build community with morning meetings / small groups, sharing our writing on FlipGrid, and recording a lot of original content for mini-lessons, over-the-top read alouds and personalized student feedback. It has been extremely busy for all teachers and families. The line has definitely blurred as to when the work day ends (Thank goodness for the “schedule” option in gmail). One of our students had to travel for a family situation. It was so cool that she could still take part in our class from the back seat of her car and join our small group sessions from where she was staying in North Carolina!

PIR: Talk to us about your motivations. What do you do each day to stay on task and positive for the kids?

Well, there are so many alarming and uncertain things happening right now that it can be paralyzing to try to control everything. Advice my dad has given me is to “control the controllables.” If something is not in your control, let it wash right over you. Only focus on things you can actually control. We can control our breath. We can do things that bring us joy. I find it restorative to take our family dog, Georgia, to the park each afternoon. She has become my go-to buddy who wordlessly helps keep me grounded--in a good way. Each day I eat an apple, listen to My Morning Jacket, and call my daughters, my dad, or my friends. My wife and I enjoy talking and eating dinner on our porch. It is really important to stay connected during this time of isolation. Each day is a new adventure! Outside our classroom is a sign that reads: “Vent about your joy--not just your problems.” I try to live by that and model finding laughter in the absurd. I also use an insane amount of post-it notes stuck on doors, steering wheels, and of course, my Chromebook to try to keep me on task. 😊

PIR: Do you feel that as the year progresses that our kids are figuring things out?

Kids continue to figure out how to: wear masks that cover their noses and mouths; learn and play on Seesaw; use their cameras; mute and unmute their mics to take turns talking; change their backgrounds so it looks as if they are in outer space or swimming in a pool; use the

google meet chat feature to support each other and to speak up if they are confused; employ time management; participate in a poll to make big class decisions; enjoy breakout room and Jamboard etiquette; advocate for themselves, solve challenging math exemplars; check for updates; share their screens; find books online; edit google docs and slides; take the whole class on a tour of their basement; play elbow tag and four corners at hybrid recess; and how to help each other and their teachers whenever they can to make the day run even more smoothly...

PIR: What about you, Pete? How do you measure your daily successes?

I feel successful when I see kids smiling, laughing, and learning. We started the year performing a play with each small group about pets needing privacy during quarantine. This activity really allowed kids to open up and be silly in a fun way, while still practicing reading with fluency and expression. As a fan of radio theatre, I see even more opportunities for these kinds of performances throughout the year! Seeing kids who started the year tentative and shy are now using Chrome Music Lab and other sites to showcase their talents. We also have students who don't want to leave when the end of the day arrives. They each have so much to say! Mrs. Cooper and I reflect on our practice each day and discuss what went well and what might need more work. It is a journey not a destination.

PIR: Anything you want to say to the families and children of your classroom?

Be safe. Be respectful. Be your best. Remember: none of us is as smart as ALL of us! Thank you for filling our buckets every day! 2R/C is still the place to be--both in person & virtually~

Also, "Read like a wolf eats." --Gary Paulsen