

Legal Update For **TEACHERS**

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ANSWERS TO TOUGH QUESTIONS

COVID-19 Special Report: Teaching Students Remotely in Uncertain Times

One of the most common quotes in the news cycle right now is, “I’ve never seen anything like this in my life.” Without a doubt, the coronavirus pandemic and widespread school shutdowns have teachers looking for guidance to help them do their jobs as effectively as possible during this ongoing disruption to life as we know it.

Stress-Busting Strategies

Q: I’m worried about everyone: my family, students, colleagues and friends. How can I project a sense of calm for my students while I’m feeling so stressed?

A: Being an educator is stressful on any given day – but this is uncharted territory for all of us. Right now, it’s crucial to take care of yourself so you can take care of the others in your life that rely on you.

Jon Harper’s stress-busting strategies for teachers are more relevant now than ever. He recommends:

- **Trim your list.** Your list of obligations might be out

of your control, but you can decide what to focus on. Pick three priorities to focus on each day.

- **Embrace vulnerability.** Widespread remote teaching is a new hurdle, so teachers are on a learning curve. Ask students what works – and what doesn’t. Be flexible and thank them for constructive feedback.
- **Allow yourself to stop.** Take a break when you need a breather. By taking a few minutes, you’ll be better prepared to model the “keep calm and carry on” mantra that students need right now.

Go to bit.ly/stress520 for more.

Tips for Long-Term Remote Teaching

Q: This is not business as usual: I’m looking at an extended school closure. What can I do to maintain control of my virtual classroom over the long haul?

A: As much as possible, try to create a sense of normalcy, Sean Slade from ASCD said in a recent webinar on the coronavirus. He recommends:

- **Create a routine greeting.** Just as you welcomed students to the classroom, greet kids as they enter the virtual learning environment.
- **Use familiar tools to establish continuity.** If you

have Blackboard, Google Classroom, etc., keep using it. This isn’t the time to try something new, if you can help it.

- **Prioritize what’s most important.** Do testing cancellations change the priority? Can you go deeper into areas of interest?
- **Establish a schedule – but be flexible.** Can you connect with, or at least email, students at the same time each day? Understand that they will be working at different times and may run into unexpected tech challenges.

Talking to Kids About COVID-19

Q: What’s the best way to talk to students about the coronavirus?

A: Teachers play an important role in helping children make sense of what they hear about COVID-19 in a way that is honest, accurate and minimizes anxiety or fear, according to Sarah Lee from School Health Branch of the CDC. When talking to students about the virus, the CDC urges teachers to:

- **Remain calm and reassuring.** Students will pick up

cues from both your message and your tone.

- **Avoid language that leads to stigma and/or encourages bullying.** Point out that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of race or nationality.
- **Provide info that is age-appropriate, accurate and honest.** Remind students that some articles posted online are based on rumors and inaccurate info.

For more on talking to kids about COVID-19, go to bit.ly/Talk520.

If you have a question, please email the editor: cwarner@pbp.com