

Going through the CARES Strategy I picked out a few areas that I need to work on in the classroom in general. Under accommodations I see a need to work on the environment, alter materials, and revise my teaching strategy. Under modifications I see a need to work on task requirements, and alternative assessment tasks.

Last year I changed the set up of the desks in my room often. I tried a modified “U”, I tried circles, and I tried having the rows face each other. I made these changes with the hopes of enhancing our class discussions. But every time I made a change I had about here days of madness. I finally gave up for the sake of peace and left the desks in rows. When it was time for discussion we moved the desks. What I discovered was that students need structure and routine, and by changing the routine I was messing with their learning. For next year I have decided to keep the rows but teach a routine for getting into discussion groups and paired work. By teaching the routines I get the class into groups quickly and quietly and the students get a structure and routine.

Along with my vow to be consistent with the seating I have thought about my teaching style. I need to move away from the majority of information being teacher driven. I need to allow students to have time together to practice the lesson or to research together. Research shows that students learn best when they are working together.

My task directions need to be clearer. Have you ever given directions and set them free on an assignment and as you walk around have to give the directions individually to each and every student? My classes do that all the time. I thought breaking down the assignments into smaller tasks toward a goal would help. Teaching the students the daily objectives and having three students repeat the directions out loud will be beneficial. I also ask them to use each other as resources. If they are unsure what to do they should ask two classmates, and if they are still unclear they should then come to me for clarification. This works well with many students but not all students will ask for assistance. I monitor those students and step in if they need help.

Part of having clear task directions is making sure they are complete and clear. For a while I will have students read the directions out loud, instead of myself, and then ask them to paraphrase what the directions were. If they are verbal directions I want them to paraphrase and then have a volunteer write them on the board for reference.

One of my big struggles is accommodating the assignments for students with IEPs. I usually leave this for my class within a class teacher, but she struggles because she does not understand the content. One major goal for the coming up school year is to make sure my objectives are set and once I know what I want my students to learn from an assignment I can work with my co-teacher and plan how those students can show competency. I want to be able to offer another option if a student is unable to perform a certain task, for example if they struggle with the writing I would want them to verbally give me the information, but still meet the requirements of complete sentences etc...

You know what will hinder me the most is time and the number of students I see on a daily basis. The extra organization I have put into place to keep the kids sane will also help me stay on top of my demands. I also realize these accommodations with not work with every class or every student, I will have to modify my plan with each new set of students, but at least I have a place to start. In some classes the personality of student may hinder group work. I have seen this. I had one class last year that begged to work in groups, but no matter how the groups were assigned or what they had to perform, they were unable to function. Only a small pocket of students did any work and the rest

copied. It was a mess. I finally had to stop group work and I explained everything that had been happening and why it was wrong to work that way. That was one class in four that could not handle learning in groups.

I think the best way to measure is to look at their work over time, look at teacher and student frustration, and to just plain ask the students how they are feeling and how they are doing. There are a number of ways to ask students; I can ask them in a large discussion, I can ask them individually, I can give them a survey, students, in my experience, are pretty honest when it comes to these kinds of situations.