

How Can You Find the Why In Distance Learning?

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This year, as we were faced with a global pandemic, we thankfully have technology that enables us to continue teaching and connecting remotely. However, while distance learning is possible, it is not without its challenges. How can we change models of learning to fit our current circumstances without compromising the integrity of what we are teaching? Or quite simply put, what does social emotional learning (SEL) teaching – focused specifically on how to generate and share kindness – look like virtually?

I have been teaching my 5th graders the power of kindness through the ThinkGive program for two years. I have seen growth in the self-esteem and self-awareness of my students as they recognize that they have the power to make a difference in the lives of others. They learn what kindness is, how they can share it with people in their lives, and how it makes the world a better place in which to live.

Teaching ThinkGive during distance learning looked very different from in-school instruction, but there was a cohesiveness to what I taught in school and online. My teaching was always informed by the “why”: why is it important to give kindness to others, and what positive impact can you generate through intentional giving? While distant from the physical classroom, students were able to use the ThinkGive platform, which had been updated for remote learning, to track their kindness gifts and engage with their peers and class as a whole.

The flexibility of the online platform allowed for a fluid transition into distance learning without losing the depth of the skills students were practicing. If anything, online learning gave students the chance to give kindness in new ways: creating a sign sharing love and posting it in a window, reaching out to a friend to see how they were feeling, or helping a grown up with chores to support the family unit. The possibilities of how to give only grew.



Ultimately, while we were virtual, the best connections I was able to retain with students were forged through conversation about creating impact and building skills that maintain meaningful relationships with others.

ThinkGive provides the space for conversation and then allows that conversation to grow into action. While conversing and then practicing building our kindness muscles, both my students and I were able to remain grounded in the why.

