

CDA Notes From The Field
Round I: TLA Check Ins
May, 2020

“Case Study:” and inspiration! One teacher’s recent reflections [here](#)

The Group:

Collective Insights:

- Engagement went way up when I sent morning messages every day. I record them the night before and have them automatically sent out by 8 am. I often see that 9 or 10 kids have viewed it by 9 am!
- I have mystery guests show up for our class meetings. The kids love that and I have more joining because of it!
- If I send a mini lesson ahead of time and ask kids to watch that first, our class meetings are so much better.
- Zoom meetings have encouraged us to have proper etiquette when in conversation online. This is something I’ll be thinking about as we start next year.
- I put a lot of pressure on myself in those first few weeks. I had to release expectations of the kids and myself. I learned that kids could do so much more than I expected. They can truly be independent! I had set them up for independence without realizing it! I’ll remember that and create those conditions next year.
- Creating a slide show with expectations, a count down and some music has surprisingly helped.
- What worked last week, doesn’t work this week. I need to change it up a lot more. I’m thinking about engagement all of the time.
- Life skills have been amazing to watch. We need to think about connecting that authentic purpose to the classroom.
 - I’m watching a lot of kids learn to bake
 - One family sent a picture of their son with his head over an engine with his father.
- Some kids are struggling with things I thought they could do. Others are doing things I suspected would be difficult.
- I’ve learned to not use ZOOM to teach, but to connect with kids. The google classroom can offer short mini lessons etc. (Many teachers are saying this!)
- I’m am connecting to parents in better ways. I’m offering more personal understanding and support. The mini lessons help them too! This is something we should think about next year.
- I’m playing games with my kids virtually to keep the community going. Kids are now offering up their own creative ideas for games. It’s a ton of fun!
- At first, parents needed a ton of help. Now that parents are on board, they don’t need me as much, which is wonderful.
- Using Flipgrid has taught me about students stepping up. Kids like recording themselves, and surprisingly, even the shy kids are willing to give it a try.
- Community in the classroom is everything. Those classrooms that had strong learning communities are doing better virtually than others. That's a testament to the importance of creating that learning culture so deeper learning occurs.
- Working through problems 1:1 and sharing my screen has worked really well.
- I'm finding that holding small group session (3 or 4 kids) is re-connecting friendships in my classroom.
- I’m letting kids run the class meetings. They put their thumb up by their face and call on each other. It’s great to see!

- Kids need to hear, “I’m super proud of you!” more than ever.
- Students are craving interaction with each other. (Many teachers said the kids are missing the social element of school. Many teachers realize that learning requires social interaction, as well).
- Kids need to be explicitly taught how to respond to each other virtually. It’s starting to happen.
- I have been supporting teachers and co-teaching virtually. Sometimes, we split team the work.
- I’ve noticed that parents finally understand what PBL is. By doing it, they understand how it works.
- I read a story and do a preview phonics lesson. I have learned to teach my “littles” to only type in the chat box when I say ok!!
- I think I could use google forms next year. I’m thinking about how Google classroom might save on paper and be a good tool for students.
- I’ve been thinking about different share tactics at the end of workshop. I’m reading the book: Don’t forget to share to get ideas.
- For the students moving between parents’ homes, the support needs to change. It is all according to which home and what support they get.

Quotes and Tidbits:

- My best learning? I had to take the fluff out!
- I’ve noticed that asking a good question makes all the difference!
- My mini lessons are finally short! I only get 5-7 minutes. This online learning has forced that and I’m so happy about it!
- I don’t need to control every little thing I give to my students. I could put much of it into a Google classroom and teach kids to turn to that as a resource.
- It is on us to find ways to engage kids. They are in full control of whether they join in or not at this point. This is not all bad!
- When I begin where students are and build on strengths, there is a lot to celebrate. I’m thinking that engagement through celebration is the way to go.
- My students have been sending me pictures of their learning. One student was hunched over an engine and his mom titled it, “Shop Class!” Another student is building a time machine with parts from a weed eater. (Jodi from NExA—if you’d like to see some of her pictures)
- Thinking strategies have become the “red thread” through all of my teaching.
- In our class meeting, we share “glows and grows!” After we share our positive things, we “woo-hoo” at the end. It’s been really fun!
- I wonder what would have happened five years ago if we had not focused as a district on trauma. Personally, I feel very supported by the district. Not one person has told me I’m not doing enough. I’m also really thinking about what I’m giving to kids. Can they do this on their own? Is it important?
- My parents and administration are being very gracious. I’ve appreciated that so much. I’m very proud of my students. My kids are still working even though their parents are working.
- Teachers are reaching out to each other a lot more. Many are turning to the work of the instructional teams.
- I’ve been thinking about, “How am I communicating? What is my tone? Am I clear?”
- Things that were already routines are carrying over. When I continue those, it is working.
- I’ve been thinking about compliant vs. engagement. In the home, if they aren’t engaged, they are less inclined to comply because they don’t have their peers to push them.

- Cute Story: My grandson is diving into the project, “Create your own country project!” He has called his country, “Demandia!!” And, he has dubbed himself, “Queen Demanda!” [Jonah: Kathy Delong’s grandson & Sarah’s son]

A few inquiry questions TLA folks are pursuing:

- How can we increase Virtual Engagement?
- How can we build google classroom as a new toolbox for learning in the classroom?
- Which staple from the teaching framework is most interesting or helpful?
- How can I make virtual learning more student centered?
- How might the 4 pillars of engagement from Ellin Keene’s book inform my virtual work with kids?
- How can I better involve and differentiate for parents?
- How can I give meaningful feedback?
- How are students effectively using the thinking strategies independently?
- How do we ALL own our learning? What are the conditions necessary?
- Explore the intersections between the PEBC framework and the guiding question: How do we prepare our students for an exhibition?
- What are the gifts our families bring? How can we leverage that?
- Engagement: How do I get more kids to share and interact more with each other?
- Communication: How are we communicating in a clear and concise manner to parents and students? Do our tasks and values emerge in our work and communication?
- Possible Task: Explore how are students demonstrating their understanding of the thinking strategy and how they are using them?
- How do I increase academic rigor through discourse?
- Explore how the discourse element of the PEBC teaching framework might inform our ability to leverage the thinking of our learning community?
- How can we give kids what they need when they need extra social emotional support?
- How can we leverage the social aspect required for powerful learning?
- How can we get kids to “lean in” more? Can we create a feedback loop and get their ideas?
- How can we use good questions to invite kids into deeper learning?

Getting Real:

- Fatigue comes with constantly re-inventing myself.
- This virtual thing is not my jam!
- About ½ of my students are turning in assignments. I’m constantly worrying, “Am I doing enough?” And, I feel like I’m overextending myself.
- I’ve finally had to create a schedule so I could find balance. I was on my laptop several nights past 1 am. I had a serious mental breakdown and needed to make a change.
- I’m becoming more of a friend to my parents. I used to be much more professional, but in these circumstances, they need me to be a friend. My tone is lighter. I’m just connecting to parents in a different way.
- The most difficult part is giving feedback to students. I’m trying to catch on to giving feedback. It is taking so much time. I’ve had good participation. How much time should I be carving out? I’m trying to monitor how much time I should be in front of the computer. I’m worried about not being there for a kid when they need me. I’m worried about how people perceive us.

Side Notes:

- Almost every TLA team is exploring the PEBC teaching framework as a whole, and then connecting a personal inquiry question to one or more of those elements.
- Many CDA K-12 teachers just completed the PEBC set of webinars around the book, Phenomenal Teaching by Wendy Ward Hoffer. The MS group had 1 hour Zoom follow up conversations to discuss how to apply the learning together.
- PEBC Book Study: *I heard Wendy mention that there were about 60 people doing this weekly study. Every top researcher/writer happens to be part of this series. One of our MS folks said, "I was with Patrick Allen in my breakout room!" There were so many CDA people online—I'm guessing nearly 20. Along with our CDA folks, there were people from all over the country coming together to learn.*