JUDITH ANDERSON '66
KINDERGARTEN TEACHER

How long have you been teaching at Friends?
48 years.

What has been the most challenging aspect of distance learning?
Not being able to have personal contact with my students to support them by encouraging their efforts and reminding and correcting them on the spot, as they are working on their assignments and practicing their skills. It has also been more difficult to individualize instruction to the degree that I am used to doing.

How have you helped your students adapt to distance learning?
We attempted to provide as much continuity and familiar routines as we could. Initially, we provided learning categories and had our students create their own schedules that they displayed in their home workspace. They individualized these by adding their own categories, such as “Art Time,” “bicycle” and “snack time.” We maintained all of our Morning Meeting routines, including silence, songs, calendar, weather and attendance, adapting them to online learning. We helped our students create “Zoom Behavior Rules” that they illustrated and posted in their homes. Conceived and created with my K colleagues, we have provided our families with a clearly delineated schedule containing daily assignments and choices as well as offering two live Zoom meetings and a third live Zoom meeting with a specialist teacher (science, dance, drama, Spanish, etc.) each day. This structure provides a firm foundation for learning that, when scaffolded by the family adults, works to support the necessary acquisition of skills and

REINVENTING
THE FRIENDS CLASSROOM ONLINE

Two Alumni Teachers Discuss the Challenges and Opportunities of Moving from In-Person Classrooms to Distance Learning

Two generations of Friends alumni are molding the next generation during unprecedented times. Judith Anderson ’66 and Matt Critchlow ’08 are helping pave the way for virtual learning in the Lower School, maintaining engagement and continuity of the curriculum. Friends met the challenge of moving into digital classrooms against the threat of declining academic progress, isolation and inequities at home.

Judy and Matt answer some of our most pressing questions around distance learning and what it has been like in the classroom just two months into virtual learning.

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Judy and Matt answer some of our most pressing questions around distance learning and what it has been like in the classroom just two months into virtual learning.
How long have you been teaching at Friends?
3 years.

What has been the most challenging aspect of distance learning?
Personally, it’s not being able to see the students. They make the job fun, and their progress as people and learners in the spring is the best time of year.

How have you helped your students adapt to distance learning?
We have stressed the traits of flexibility and growing from mistakes since day one in our class, and our students—and their parents—have embodied those traits to the fullest by sticking with us as we build a curriculum on the fly and deal with all the technical difficulties that come along with it. Young children are the most accepting people you will meet, and their ability to roll with this has been inspiring.

There is an ongoing resilience, overall joy, and creativity of my students, and I have witnessed all their beautiful projects online, their Lego and art creations, their amazing math and reading work, their games, and their efforts helping to improve our environment from conserving our natural resources to picking up garbage, to recycling materials by using them in collages and other work pieces. Their compassion and kindness toward one another, making birthday cards for their classmates, expressing kind words for each other reminds me that we can remain hopeful as we weather this storm.

Will distance learning have a lasting effect on your teaching or change any of your conventional teaching methods when campus reopens?
Yes, undoubtedly! I will have a host of new ideas for project work, new reading, writing, and math worksheets, new uses of technology, and a greater sense of humility borne out of the necessity to “rely on the village” to get through this crisis!