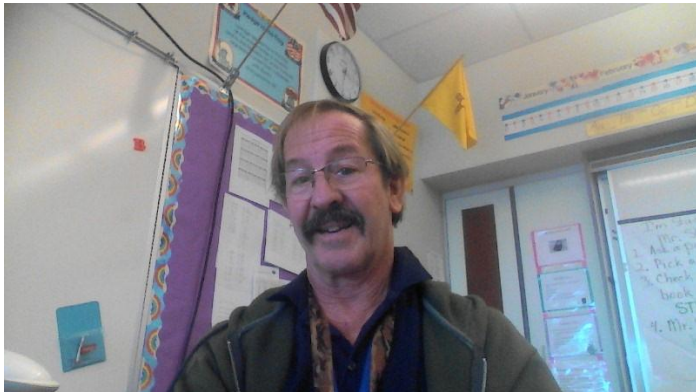


# Truth Or Consequences Teacher Shares Challenges of Online Learning And Some Surprising Positives

By [Madison Staten](#) • 18 hours ago



Second grade teacher John Swicinski will be the first to tell you of the positive strides being made within the education system this year.

"I think the overall positive effect is COVID caused our administrators, our state, the government to start spending more money so that every single kid has a computer now," Swicinski said. "Prior to that, I had five computers I shared with 20 kids, and rotated them every day. Now each child has their own computer."

Yet, for all the new technology, the Truth or Consequences Elementary School teacher will freely admit to the struggles many in the teaching community have been facing during the pandemic.

"It's frustrating at times, it was overwhelming," Swicinski said "I've had a day where I've never been so overwhelmed and just feeling like shutting down that I just wanted to cry. I've also, at the same time, learned how much I love kids. So when you put your heart into it, we're all human."

At 66 years old, Swicinski says he feels grateful he's been able to gain so

much knowledge about new teaching technology. He's used that knowledge to get creative, adapting his curriculum to work virtually and cater to children at different reading levels.

"Because of our reading levels, I have kids that they would love to learn about government, but the word government, they can't read. Legislature, they can't read. President, they can't really make out yet at second grade," Swicinski said. "So what the advantage is to our lessons, is when the kids are at home, we compensate by every little drag, click or snippet. I can add to it an audio bit. They click on the little triangle, and I am reading it to them."

Swicinski also spoke about the merits of the smaller virtual class sizes, which help him to spend more time with each of his students individually. Students are broken up into two groups, A and B, with a max of 10 students per group.

Zoom video conferencing also allows teachers to get a basic idea of the home lives of students, something Swicinski says is helpful.

"I'm seeing a good cross section, because each little square is a representation of children that are living in a trailer park, in a foldout tent, [or] living in a house on the lake," Swicinski said. "So it covers a whole vast socioeconomic spectrum. In a short little Zoom screen, it gives me a good insight into the kids."

It also gives Swicinski an insight into how parents are adapting to online learning. He says he's not only teaching students through Zoom, but also parents who are unfamiliar with the technology.

"A lot of times it is a matter of pride; lack of experience with the computer," Swicinski said. "For whatever reasons the exposure and understanding of how to use a basic computer, that we take for granted because our jobs require us to, a lot of these folks come from many different service

industries where you don't need computer skills. So it's a learning curve on all three levels, student, teacher, parent, and I'm the teacher who is teaching the parents as well as the children."

Juggling additional pandemic-related responsibilities, including increased paperwork, on top of teaching hasn't been easy according to Swicinski, who told KRWG it can often be overwhelming and depressing.

Still, Swicinski empathized that teachers are dedicated to their students and will continue to fight for the best learning experience possible, something he says is better achieved by working together with parents.

"We need to work peacefully together. We're on the same side," Swicinski said. "My school, I think you can't work here if you do not really care about kids."