



Welcome fellow Recovering Traditionalists to Episode 56. Today I'm urging everyone to Stop Teaching.

Welcome to Build Math Minds the podcast, where fidelity to your students is greater than fidelity to your textbook. I'm your host, Christina Tondevold, the recovering traditionalist and BuildMathMinds.com Founder, where my mission is to change the way we teach elementary math to our kiddos. Are you ready to start building math minds and not just creating calculators? Let's get started.

I could go on and on about this topic right now, so in case I do here's the message I want you to hear: The academics of children is not the priority right now.

If you are stressed out because someone in your family is not working right now due to the Coronavirus, or maybe you are stressed out because someone in your family IS working and you're worried they might contract it. It doesn't matter what is stressing you out right now. But the point is that ensuring our children "keep up" with their learning should not be one of them.

Even if parents do spend all the time trying to figure out their child's Google Classroom or all the time sitting down with their children to help them with the packets that were sent home, they aren't 'keeping up' with their academics.

No matter how amazing a home educator you are, you are not going to be great right now. Yes, I'm talking to the parents who are not trained educators but also the parents who normally are teachers who are now homeschooling their own children along with trying to teach their classroom remotely.

All of us who are trying to teach right now are not doing our best even if we are trained educators. When we are stressed, worried, anxious, etc we cannot do our best work.

One of the issues stressing everyone out is the uncertainty. There is no direction about what is/should be done in this situation, so every district is different. Even within districts I'm hearing stories from friends and followers that their district is saying you need to send lessons via Google Classroom - go figure it out. No direction on how many, how long, how to do it, etc. It's making the educational gap even bigger. Those teachers who are "up on the technology" are creating amazing ways to interact with their students (who do have internet access) and those teachers who haven't been using technology are struggling just to figure out how to use Google Classroom, let alone design lessons for kids inside of there. So the gap between the types of lessons kids are getting is getting bigger and bigger.

If I could send any message to everyone in education and all the parents of school-aged kids it would be to Stop Teaching. The only people that doesn't apply to our high school students (especially Seniors) who need to finish up credits. But for everyone else, Stop Teaching.

Your kids will be fine. Over on the show notes [buildmathminds.com/56](https://buildmathminds.com/56), I'm going to post a [link to a video](#) someone shared with me about how these few months of missed schooling are really just a quarter-inch of a child's education. Missing out on a quarter-inch isn't going to be detrimental to them.

Now I know that isn't possible for everyone out there but I'd like to outline my points and maybe if more people start talking about the current situation in this way we can help convince other people that academics isn't the most important thing right now. Honestly, this episode is for parents and for education admins who are deciding what's happening in their district or state. Because it isn't the teachers saying they want to give kids all this work. It's the admin and those above them telling the teachers what needs to be done and parents requesting things.

So first let's start with parents. Personally, I have 4 kids ranging from 6th grade down to 1st grade. My husband is still working. I am actually still working because I provide professional development for elementary teachers online, like [this podcast](#) and my vlog. So, I'm still doing all the stuff I would normally do when my kids are in school but now I do it with a house full of kids and I'm also supposed to help them all do the work that gets posted every day.

If you listened to last week's episode then you know my thoughts on this but briefly I'm not concerned with my kids' academics right now. There are such bigger things to worry about and our kids missing out on a month or two of academics really won't hurt them. Now, if I had a kid struggling in a certain area then I would reach out to that teacher and ask for specific things I could do to help them in that one area. But for my kids, they are getting the school of life right now. Learning to do laundry, clean, make dinner, bake, etc along with a little reading each day and of course we are playing lots of games because games are my favorite way to have them practice math.

The home situations right now are so very different. There are parents who are both at home, not working, and only have one child. They have lots of time to spend with that child and want work to do with them. They appreciate the work and the structure it provides to their day.

Compare that to the families who have both parents working outside the home (at a grocery store, hospital, or as a first responder) constantly worried about coming in contact with the virus. Their kids are home alone during the day and the older kid has now become the caretaker of the younger kids, but yet still has to find time and a quiet space to do the hours of work that the teacher posted or sent them in a packet. When the parents get home to their 3 kids all they want to do is relax, watch a movie, and hang out with their family. They don't want to spend their time at home helping their 3 kids go through the hours of work that was given for each child.

And that's just a couple scenarios of the families that have parents there who could help their children out. There are so many scenarios of kids who do not have good home lives and adding to their plates in a very trauma filled time is not good for those kids.

Forcing people to do it is just causing more stress and for them to not be able to give their best. Even if the stuff being sent isn't 'required' work, parents and many kids are still feeling like it is. And that leads me into what we are doing to teachers.

Some districts are requiring elementary teachers to create lessons for every day, every subject. Yet these aren't required things for kids to do. It's like districts are making teachers do stuff just to keep them busy.

If you think that teachers somehow need to 'earn their pay' during this time

- 1) I can almost guarantee that the majority of teachers have already put in enough time outside of school before their school was shut down. Teachers spend their evenings and their weekends doing things they need to for their job but don't have time to do it during the school day because they are teaching. Now of course there are always the lone few teachers who aren't doing that but why punish the majority for the actions of the small group?
- 2) There are lots of other ways teachers can be earning their pay. How about letting them do some professional learning so they can get ready to help the kids when school does start back up?? We know there is going to be a gap in kids' learning during this time, even if you are sending home schoolwork, a lot of kids aren't going to do it. Maybe the time right now is better served learning and coming up with a plan for when the kiddos come back to school???

Instead we are asking teachers to figure out a way to teach students online for two months instead of having them focus on things they can do as a school to improve the educational experience for all kids for years to come.

I get that some of the things that teachers are doing right now, like Google Classroom, may be something that could be a great addition for years to come. So, administrators I ask you to think about what you are asking your teachers to do. Is this something that will benefit your teachers and students in the long run, or is it something that is being used as a band-aid right now to get you through to the end of the school year??

I hope this episode can help prompt some discussions within your district or state and give you some words or ideas to help you in those discussions. In reality I know we aren't going to Stop Teaching right now. Teachers are being asked to do things that are out of their control and you are doing the best you can with it right now.

So, over on the show notes [buildmathminds.com/56](https://buildmathminds.com/56) I've linked up three resources I've recently created to help you out and hopefully help give you some control in your situation.

The first is a video and some resources for teachers who are being asked to [teach math online](#). I give you my top three math activities to do online with your students.

Second, a compilation of PD videos about great math teaching to give you [PD at your Fingertips](#) in case your district is wanting to have you use this time to do some professional learning.

The third is a series of videos about how to [build math fluency](#). These videos are for elementary teachers and even for parents of elementary kids. On the video page you can also request my Building Math Fluency Starter Kit.

Building kids' math fluency can impact everything they are going to learn in math. It all starts with understanding what fluency really entails, how to build that fluency when it comes to the basic facts, and what kinds of activities you can be doing to build true fluency for students.

I show you how to do all of that inside this Starter Kit so that you will be ready to hit the ground running when you get students back in your classroom, or if you are teaching right now this kit will give you some ideas on things to make sure you focus on to ensure their mathematical foundation is solid. Again, I know so much of what you have to do right now as a teacher is out of your control but I want to encourage you to look towards the future for when you get students back in your classroom. You will have control over what happens when they come back and I want to help give you some ideas through that video series and fluency kit. That's linked up on the show notes page [buildmathminds.com/56](https://buildmathminds.com/56)

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