



A PROGRAM OF JCRC

---

Greater Boston Jewish Coalition for Literacy

---

### **Boston Remote Tutoring Reflections**

**Stacy Grossman  
Ohrenberger School**

When the pandemic took root here this past March, I took a two-week break from tutoring and focused on self-preservation. I fetched my kids from college, loaded up on non-perishables, toilet paper and cleaning supplies and figured out a game plan with my siblings for caring for my elderly father who lives alone in New York.

By the end of March, I felt ready for whatever the plague had in store for me and my family and so I turned my attention to my reading tutees -- 8 and 9 year old students at the Ohrenberger school of West Roxbury. I felt like I had abandoned them, which in fact I did, and wanted to make up for lost time as soon as possible.

I reached out to my mentor teacher, Ms. Margarita Gomez, who, unlike me, did not have the luxury of taking a break from work and was very much in the thick of trying to navigate remote learning for her third graders and her two high school age twins. She was grateful to hear from me, and I was grateful that she was grateful. She gave me my students' email addresses, after she secured permission from their parents and guardians, and I established a zoom account.

The first weeks were rough. It took several email attempts before my students would even respond. When they finally did respond, I set up virtual reading sessions but sometimes they would forget to show up. Or, if they did show up they were in their pajamas making breakfast – not exactly learning ready.

But, as time went by we got better. I became more flexible on my expectations and they started showing up more regularly. From the beginning of April through the middle of June, I met twice weekly with five students. We read *Dragon of the Red Dawn* by Mary Pope Osborne and did a deep dive into Japanese cultural history. I supplemented our readings with interesting You Tube videos that explored the art of the tea ceremony, the history of the Samurai, bonsai gardening and what a typical day in school is like for Japanese 4<sup>th</sup> grade students. It was really fun and we were learning together. And, because of the intimate nature of our time together – we were connecting with each other in our home settings – the experience felt especially nurturing and supportive. I met parents and guardians and we talked about how their kids were doing both educationally and emotionally.

It was an honor and a privilege to be a modicum of help to families who are facing dire challenges right now. I don't know what this new academic year will bring, but I have reached out to my mentor teacher and to my former students to let them know that I want to be of help. And, if I can offer remote tutoring to one, two or more students, I will feel lucky indeed.