



# Coronavirus: A Crisis forged into an Opportunity

## Bethlehem University

**I**nternational Online Teaching Experiences from Bethlehem University Students serving and learning from other Lasallians

As a result of the Corona pandemic and its consequences that lead to the closing of schools and universities to face-to-face learning; Bethlehem University Education students saw the training course that allows them to practice teaching at local schools severely affected. In face of that, their professor started to look for ways to change the crisis into an opportunity and, quite literally, a “teachable moment”. In achieving that, the Lasallian network proved invaluable, allowing our Bethlehemite Students to teach and observe teaching in two different lasallian institutions in Mexico and one in Rwanda. Here are some testimonies from the student-teachers involved.

“My name is Orjowan Khalil, I’m from Jerusalem. My major is English Education and this is my 4th year as a student in Bethlehem University. I participated in two online English teaching experiences. The first online practice that I joined was in Mexico. The name of the school is Colegio Regis-La Salle in Hermosillo. During this experience, I observed the

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English lessons and even taught six classes. In the second project I was paired in a one-on-one English conversation practice experience with with a student from Mexico named David. David is a student at Centro de Formación Integral La Salle in Tijuana. I met with him twice a week. Every meeting was two hours long. It was a free conversation in English; we talked about any number of topics including our Mexican and Palestinian cultures and traditions. When I heard about this online project, I was very excited to join. One of my dreams was to observe English classes outside of Palestine. Fortunately, this dream came true. It was a great opportunity for me and I happily took it. This experience taught me so much: first, I was able to enrich myself with the different strategies that the English teachers utilized in Colegio Regis. Even though education shifted to online mode quite abruptly, the four English teachers that I observed classes with. taught me that English can be taught creatively, enjoyably, and in an attractive way even online. With David, I also learned very much. Since he is a doctor, he taught me so much about medicine and what to do in emergency situations and other things. In addition, I helped him improve his English-speaking skills. All in all, it was a very wonderful experience that broadened my views of online education”.

“My name is Elizabeth Qabar, I’m from Bethlehem. My major is English Education and I am in my 4th year as a student in Bethlehem University. I chose to teach English to Rwandan students in Africa; I taught once a week on Saturdays for one hour. At first, I taught them vocabulary related to their crops and animals since our professor told us that was part of their environment. Then, I asked them what they wanted to learn. They sent me a list of subjects to teach and I taught each class accordingly. I used PowerPoint presentations to present my work; I took into consideration visual and auditory learners, so I added pictures and a video for each class. Then at the end, I would send their teacher a worksheet on the subject I taught to do for homework. After they finish doing the worksheets, their teacher sent me their work via email. This experience taught me that online teaching is not easy but can be very fun and interesting. I loved every minute of this experience and I feel privileged for being part of something that awesome. I really recommend this experience for other students’ because it will enrich their knowledge about teaching and specifically online teaching”.

“My name is Safaa Abutair, I’m from Jerusalem. I am a 3rd-year student at Bethlehem University and my major is teaching English language. I have joined two online English teaching experiences. The first one is observing online classes at Colegio Regis Lasalle and the other is an online conversation with a university student from Mexico who needs to improve her English language skills, her name is Ariadna. Both projects have been great! In the first project I had the chance to observe 3 different classes with great teachers: Miss Estefania Miramontes, Miss Carolina Higuera, and Miss Liliana Cañez Michel. I observed 3 classes per week and I learned many useful teaching tools, techniques and methods from them. Furthermore, I like the way they treat their students kindly, respectfully and building friendly relationship with them which is beautiful”.

In the second project I had online educational conversations with Ariadna. She is a student at Centro de Formación Integral La Salle in Tijuana. Lociana, another student majoring in English Education here in Bethlehem and I have been having this experience with Ariadna and teaching her some English. We met once a week on Wednesdays for 1 hour. Lociana and I prepared lesson plans for each conversation. We talked about different topics and some of the subjects that we discussed are:

“The History of Palestine” and “The History of Mexican Music”. Ariadna presented a PowerPoint about the history of Mexican music and that was a great session. We have had a lot of fun, and I have learned a lot about Mexican music. The conversations have been very nice; I had the chance to know Ariadna and help her develop, and strengthen her English skills a bit. She is a beautiful girl inside and out. It was a great experience for me to get to know a new girl who speaks another language, has a different culture, is from another country, and is in a different continent”.

“I’m Jameela Mohammad Hamamrah, 3rd year student at Bethlehem University; I’m studying Teaching English Language. I’ve been teaching English online to Lasallian students at the La Salle Centre in Kirenge, Rwanda. One of my qualities as a teacher is to be sincere to the teaching process, and always try to give my students’ the best learning experiences. When I heard about this great program, I was sure that I belonged in it. I was very excited to get to know the students and to start teaching them. First, I was asking myself if I was qualified for teaching them or not, to be a good example for them, how to engage what I know with what I want to teach? So, I started planning, I prepared my lessons and online games for them. I was very happy to see how they were interacting with me and responding to what I was teaching. My concern was communicating with them and letting them speak and communicate with me. So, I tried to build a base of vocabulary which I focused on in most of the classes. This remarkable experience has given me many unforgettable moments that will remain in my mind forever. This experience proves that distances can’t stop the teaching and learning process, their learning was clear throughout the evaluations and homework assignments and, of course in their participation in class. This experience also proved to me that I’m capable of this kind of teaching. I was able to adapt the subjects and the teaching methods in a way that suited their ages, levels and personalities. I gained an experiential base in online teaching methods and strategies through this great experience which will enrich my technological skills as a future teacher and help me face any circumstances that may occur during any future teaching life. I’m glad to be a part of this great experience, thank God for giving us such a great opportunity”.