Elizabeth Senecal, on Tech in Preschool
St. Mary's School, Waterford, NY

Tell us how your spring went.
"It was a little crazy! In the beginning of remote learning, it seemed like I changed my system every week. The parents were very understanding, and by late April/early May, I had a consistent routine that allowed the class to progress from lots of review into new topics and learning."

How do you use technology to stay connected, and what benefits have you seen?
"I use Class Dojo to record a 5-8 minute video every day. I record myself going through all of the elements of our Morning Meeting-- singing the good morning song, weather song and day of the week song. Then I read a story and connect it to our theme. Last year, I posted a follow-up activity for the kids to do at home, and their parents would share a photo or video response back on Dojo. This sharing let the families enjoy each other's work and pass along messages from child to child."

Communication with families is so important. How have you been working with family engagement?
"We all got very familiar with using Dojo for communicating and accessing lessons, and will keep using it even when we are teaching in person. In the spring, I held a Zoom meeting every two weeks so that we could gather as a class. It was hard to find a time that everyone could make, especially as the weather got nicer. I found that consistency and repetition was really important for families with young children. I try to keep it simple and stay with one method for communication that we all use."

What are you adding to your Fall 2020 program?
"If we go back online, I'll offer 4 choices for followup activities, and let the families choose 2 of them. This will stand in for the learning centers we have in the classroom. I'm also planning to do more parent education on why I pick certain activities -- how a simple activity like play-dough can develop the fine-motor skills that lead to writing in kindergarten. I want them to know why preschool work is important for their child."