
Gladstone teachers tackle distance learning

As it became clear that schools would not reopen this school year, Gladstone teachers faced a big question. Can we transform school from a classroom-based model to distance learning in just two weeks? It did not seem possible.

While district staff worked at lightning speed to sanitize and distribute more than 800 Chromebook computers to families, teachers met in videoconference meetings to master new technology platforms and plan lessons students could work on at home. Distance learning began on April 13.

“I really have to give it to our staff,” said John Wetten Principal Wendy Wilson. “They turned on a dime, and despite a steep technology learning curve, they brought innovation and positive energy to help our students through a difficult time.”

Course material has been delivered using pre-recorded videos. For middle school and high school students these are delivered via Google Classroom, a familiar platform. For elementary students, lessons come on Seesaw, a new tool for both teachers and students. In the fourth week, the district began allowing some real-time video interaction for grades 6 to 12, including math tutorials and opportunities for home room classes to connect.

Parents say that while kids miss their classmates and teachers, having a regular routine and a connection to school has boosted children’s spirits. “My daughter plays her teacher’s video over and over just to hear her voice,” said one parent.

Teachers have shifted from group instruction to helping individual students. “I am now able to give specific feedback to almost all of my students most days,” said third grade teacher Patti Banka. “Unfortunately during these hard times, some families are just not able to access the technology. It breaks my heart not to have a personal connection to teach and guide every single student.”

Seth Arnold, who teaches band at Kraxberger Middle School and Gladstone High School, also misses daily contact with students. “I’m teaching in new ways now. Music creation software has been a great way to get kids to compose music they’re interested in,” he said. “When this is all over, we will appreciate that playing music with people every day is a gift.”

“Our students have recognized the change and disappointment of not being at school each day,” said fifth grade teacher Cathy Mitchell. “One lesson kids are learning is that when we accept change with a positive mindset, we can do hard things in life. Together and with perseverance we have been able to launch online learning. And that’s an incredible accomplishment.”

Distance learning has brought teachers together to share their strengths and collaborate in new ways. “Even though we are farther apart physically, we have actually become closer,” said Banka. “Our grade level team is supporting one another through difficulties with balancing family life and work life to frustration with noise levels and learning this monumental task of teaching our students from a distance.”

Teachers are seeing some students turn in work on weekends, or in the middle of the night. “One upside has been the freedom of choice that comes with distance learning,” said Arnold. “Students can choose the time, place, and subject they learn at any given moment. What teenager doesn’t want more control over their

lives?”

PHOTO: Gladstone band teacher Seth Arnold teaches students how to compose music using Bandlab.com, a free app integrates drum machines, samples, and student instrumental and vocal recordings.

PHOTO: Third grader Leoni Marlia solves a math problem using the Seesaw app.

.....
Gladstone grad wins full ride scholarship

Gladstone High senior Ethan Bulisco may not get a traditional graduation ceremony, but he will receive something even more valuable, a full-ride scholarship to Warner Pacific University. Bulisco is the recipient of the Act Six Scholarship, which will provide four years of college tuition, room, and board.

The scholarship program supports emerging leaders to attend faith- and social justice-based colleges, with 90% of scholars coming from low-income households or families with no previous college attendees.

“Having this opportunity is a huge blessing,” said Bulisco. “From growing up in poverty, from being in and out of foster care and really having everything go against me, this shows that no matter what your story is you can always make it positive. My career goal is to become a full time nurse.”

“The biggest thing I will take away from my years at Gladstone High School is that community is really important,” he added. “Being involved in your community really makes a difference.”

PHOTO: Ethan Bulisco

.....
Kraxberger art students honored

Two art students from Kraxberger Middle School were award winners in the countywide online art show organized by the Clackamas Education Service District.

Lillyann Paulosky’s pastel drawing “Candlelight Dinner” won an Honorable Mention in the sixth grade competition. Jairo Feliciani’s drawing “Bermmy” won an Honorable Mention in the seventh grade competition.

Several other artists from Gladstone High School and Kraxberger Middle School also participated in the online art show, viewable here: <https://bit.ly/35QVprB>

PHOTO: Bermmy by Jairo Feliciani

PHOTO: Candlelight Dinner by Lillyann Paulosky