

Teachers keeping spirits up while connecting with students during closure

By [Carl Blankenship](#) [Email the author](#) Published 12:01 am Thursday, March 26, 2020

SALISBURY — School facilities have been closed for nearly two weeks as teachers and students continue on with education despite no in-person classes being held.



Each K-12 student in the district has a device and learning has all been moved digital while the district continues to work despite schools being closed until May 15 after an order from Gov. Roy Cooper to close all public schools in the state in an effort to prevent the spread of COVID-19.



Knollwood Elementary first-grade teacher Olympia Pruitt said she is thankful the district has already moved to a one-device-per-student model on devices, though K-2 students do not take their iPads home under normal circumstances. Setting up the tablets to use from home was a bit of a process. Pruitt is using an educational app called Seesaw to design activities for students, post video messages for students, receive videos back and communicate with parents.

Schools have been taking to social media to post pictures and videos for students about what they are doing, reading for kids and announcements while the facilities are closed.

"The hardest part is that we miss each other and that we're not able to be in the classroom and have that face-to-face communication," Pruitt said.

Pruitt connects with families two to three times a week. And she is a parent, too, juggling her high school and middle school students' studies at home at the same time. Pruitt said she is trying to plan activities to keep her class engaged and understand it is still school work despite being at home.

"You just have to look forward to the day you can come back together and hope and pray it's before the end of the school year," Pruitt said.

Alison Sobataka teaches biology, earth and environmental science at West Rowan High School. And this is her first year as a teacher. Sobataka is trying to stay in touch with students consistently, even if they do not have consistent internet connections at home, via the Remind app.

On Tuesday, she had virtual meetings with her classes via the teleconference service Zoom. The meetings were not mandatory, but they helped students with work and there was a chance to fit in some social interaction. Sobataka said she is trying to give students the opportunity to have some sense of normalcy while they are at home. She's also encourages students to post about activities they are doing away from laptops and cellphones.

American history and AP psychology teacher Joshua Yoder said that instead of lessons that would be covered over the course of an entire classroom session, teachers now have to give students the information they need in a way that enables them to work through it while also

balancing other classes they have.

Yoder said he is encouraging his students to remain calm while the coronavirus pandemic is ongoing and research the subject so they can stay educated about what is going on and keep themselves safe.

“Kind of having that reassurance and relying on some of the skills that we as teachers encourage when we’re in school, hopefully they are able to rely on that and it will give them a calming sense too,” Yoder said.

Today, Yoder had his first Zoom meeting with honors American history I class, and the students had to each take on perspectives of different people involved in the American Revolution and debate as that person using the video chatting.