

CONNECT

From page A1

School District. "Maybe some have adjusted to this new environment. Likely though, there is an underlining sense of anxiety, a sense of confusion or dis-order."

Those stresses are compounded with parents learning to work from home or worse being laid off, she said. There are also families figuring out Remote Learning, students being cooped up without an outlet or regular connection with their friends, a growing uncertainty of an un-seeable threat from a highly contagious virus and earthquakes to boot.

"There is still much to be hopeful for, though," Lenox said. "There are many supports and resources. So many people with the Carson City School District who are doing so much good in an unprecedented format."

Although there are many untold stories and examples, below are some of the more recent things happening within the Carson City School District.

■ In lieu of missing Band-O-Rama, the elementary, middle and high school bands performed from self-isolated homes in a combined musical performance online.

■ Students at Empire Elementary School are enjoying weekly messages via YouTube from their principal, Susan Squires.

■ Principal Paula Zona and staff from Seeliger Elementary have video shoutouts to help put students at ease.

■ Bethany Herman, P.E. teacher at Fritsch Elementary School, organized a "Ball Drop" where she cleaned up and delivered playground

toys/balls to students to use for outdoor fun or recess at home.

■ Educators at Mark Twain Elementary School created a "We Miss You" sign on the fence in front of their school.

■ At Bordewich Bray Elementary, Principal Lisa Hutchison provided a morning announcement to families and students.

■ The teachers and staff from Fremont Elementary School created a video for their students so they could see many of their teachers.

■ Carson High School created a virtual nod for prom and prom candidates.

■ Digital platforms are being utilized to meet the needs of special education students.

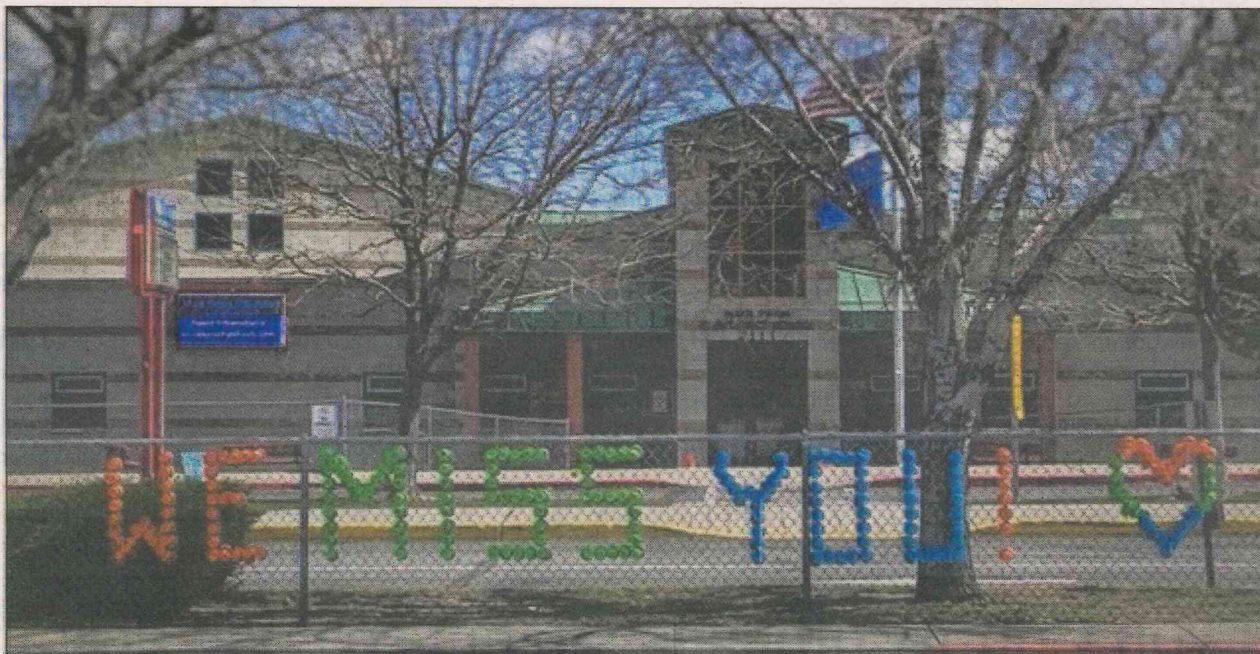
■ Many students in particular who may have been intimidated in the classroom and don't normally speak up, have opened up in conversation via video conferencing.

■ Teletherapy platforms are also assisting speech students.

■ Meals are prepared and distributed daily for those students and families in need.

■ And so much more.

"There is hope. There is peace. We feel deeply and are concerned for the wellbeing and physical health of all our students," said Richard Stokes, superintendent for the Carson City School District. "I know these are challenging times. We all miss our school friends and teachers and look forward to the time when school things can be 'normal' again. Until then, keep being strong. Focus on the things you can control like your school and home responsibilities and duties. Be hopeful. Things will be OK."



COURTESY PHOTO

Educators at Mark Twain Elementary School created a "We Miss You" sign on the fence in front of their school.

TEACHERS

From page A1

"Everyone has been very supportive and ready for some of the changes we've been working on," she said.

Moving to a digital platform the week of March 23 after COVID-19 spurred the need for social distancing caused a profound impact for the district's special education population. It took a swift adjustment, though it was hardly a change to the relationship among teachers and students, Lenox said.

"Our teachers have been taking their work and looking at each individual kid and how to support that," Lenox said. "Our students' change is really hard. It's like the Titanic - the rudder is not big enough."

Lenox said it's harder for her teachers to be away from their students.

"They miss their kids," she said. "The teachers want to come back. They all want to do their job. Their love is to be in their classroom. They're grateful we have a digital platform and can see those kids on a Zoom meeting, and that wouldn't have happened without it. There's a really nice relationship being

built with this as well."

Teachers generally stay on their same routine and maintain that daily contact. Classes at the secondary level remain on task and on schedule.

First period classes that go from 8 to 9 a.m., for example, stay that way online, and staff members help each other in teams, Lenox said. They also ensure they continue to meet the standards and make sure their students have everything they need at home.

"Teachers all work together and come up with lessons," she said. "If you have four teachers and one got sick, the other three pick up the slack."

Lenox said teachers are able to formulate plans for tangible lessons for students at home and find videos for them to watch or appropriate websites for them to read, whatever the subject might be. If it pertains to music, students can look up information about Mozart or Tchaikovsky, Lenox said.

"(The staff is) holding up well," she said. "We have an amazing team. They'll be tired later, and they are concerned."

Everyone has a chance to make a difference from

home. Paraprofessionals, nurses, social workers and administrators are all doing their part digitally, Lenox said. Students also are receiving their meals at various locations.

"Everyone in the district has a role from custodial to (Superintendent) Mr. Stokes, and they all believe it's so important to get every student across the stage; the goal is all the same," she said. "It's so worrisome when we're looking at the budget. Everybody does a great job."

At the end of the day, though, Lenox said, mental wellness for the staff comes in the form of getting to be around the students.

"This job stinks without kids," she said. "There is that passion that is driving them to do this job. There's something that has them connecting and wanting to help, and it's more powerful than money, and that's the piece that's missing and it's harder on our staff."

Lenox said it's important for families to know even while school campuses are closed, staff members and administrators remain available for questions or concerns.

"We're still available from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m., and you can always e-mail the principals," she said.

Sierra Lutheran High School
Private Sierra Lutheran

High School also is reporting success in its transition to digital learning. Brian Underwood, director of school development, said staff ensures students have time to collaborate with staff and each other for academic and social needs.

"The faculty, staff, and student body of Sierra Lutheran High School have exhibited tremendous resiliency at the outset of the COVID-19 outbreak and have adroitly adapted to the tools and strategies necessary to further the school's Christian mission, alongside its college prep focus," Underwood said.

The school is offering a Zoom writing workshop on April 16, adapting its curriculum to help its students as school closures remain in force through at least April 30 per state mandates until further notice.

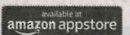
"Among the greatest priorities for the school, at all times, is ensuring that the spiritual, social and emotional needs of the faculty and staff are met," Underwood said. "In this present environment, this includes intentional contact the faculty initiates with students, devotional and chapel messages and routine contact of various kinds. For the staff, it includes individual and group time to check-ins throughout the week and scheduled prayer time."



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