

Teachers unite and stay positive in quarantine

Faculty work to pull together an efficacious plan in order to help students during the transition to eLearning and continue productivity

Editor's Note: Journalism I students reached out to FC teachers and staff to see how they were adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine. One pattern emerged – they were all trying to find the positive and unite others, especially through their use of technology and advice for their students.

Heather Bradley, Spanish teacher

By Abby Hoffman

As the world spirals into uncertainty, Spanish teacher Heather Bradley does what she can to keep her students from spiraling with it.

"It's hard not to jump to the

worst case scenario from time to time. But I try to stay positive," said Bradley.

As she knows many students are struggling, she does her best to limit the amount of stress her class adds to their lives.

"I am trying to check in from time to time to make sure that those who feel overwhelmed have a lifeline." Her students know that she is one email away, ready and available to offer help in these overwhelming times.

Bradley has been able to stay in touch with her students by reaching out to them individually and hosting *Google Meets* for her classes.

Quarantine life has not been easy for Bradley, as she is a

mother with young children who are at risk.

"I have chosen to stay positive by being productive," she said. She has kept herself busy by sewing and donating masks to those in need, "being able to donate something to help has been good for my soul."

Angela Hampton, choir and handbells director

By Sydney Landrum

During this unprecedented time, we all have people in our lives who are still managing to bring in some positivity and normalcy. Choir director Angela Hampton has done just that.

Although Hampton admits that eLearning has had its struggles and challenges, she has found new ways to bring a creative learning experience for her choir students. She said that she had to ask herself, "What is going to work for my situation?" before creating her e-learning plan.

Historically at the end of a concert, the a cappella choir sings the Irish Blessing. This tradition began with former director Michael Neely. Since concerts are not an option during this time, Hampton took it upon herself to create a virtual choir recording of the Irish Blessing. She said that she was not looking for perfection with this choral project, but rather a comforting sentiment to the Class of 2020 as well as for the underclassmen. The historical significance of this song will



Kelly Bratcher/Self Submission

BUSINESS TEACHER KELLY BRATCHER shares herself being safe and promotes safety among students and faculty.

bring comfort to the students whose year was abruptly ended.

Students recorded the song in their voice part at home and submitted it into *Google Classroom*. Hampton took the recordings and entered them into a template on the app *Garage Band*. Both students and teachers have had challenges with implementing new technology into instruction and learning, but Hampton has embraced these challenges.

Although she says this is not an ideal way to teach, she does state that, "I hope students can learn time management skills as well as how to be individually responsible."

Kelly Bratcher, business teacher

By Meghana Mohankumar

The coronavirus has created

a new normalcy where schools have shut down and going out in public seems dangerous. Because of these changes, many teachers have shifted their focus from grades to connections with students. Business teacher Kelly Bratcher has training in instructional technology, and these skills have helped her find a variety of ways to continue her connections with students.

"Once a week I host an optional *Google Meet* where students can drop in to ask questions, or to just hang out and visit with one another. I have shared a *Google Jamboard* Bratcher.

Bratcher has also used technology to continue to encourage her students.

"I also use the private comment feature in *Google*



Heather Bradley/Self Submission

SPANISH TEACHER HEATHER BRADLEY poses with her #staysafe sign during quarantine.



Larissa Jerke/Self Submission

COUNSELOR LARISSA JERKE promotes safety during COVID-19 with her #staysafe sign.

Classroom to leave feedback for the students. I will sometimes ask them how they are doing or add a positive message to keep them motivated. At the end of the week, I post feedback for the entire class. Here I try to include a positive message and a fun bitmoji with a fun message, like 'You Rock,' said Bratcher.

Bratcher's efforts to encourage her students to stay connected and participate in eLearning have had extremely positive results.

"Through all of this, I have witnessed all of my students rise to the challenge and they continue to work hard and push through this rough time. I was blown away at the large percentage of my students that showed up and have been submitting quality work despite the challenges that eLearning poses," said Bratcher.

Because of quarantine, Bratcher has also started learning new skills with her family with the help of technology.

"I started learning piano with my kids. We followed a YouTube tutorial. We also found a karate class and a yoga class on YouTube. My family joined a Facebook group called *Painting with Purpose*," said Bratcher.

Being in quarantine has also taught Bratcher about the importance of human interaction.

"I didn't realize how much I valued human connection. It isn't the places we go or the things we do, but rather the people that really make you whole."

Just because we cannot meet in the classroom during the fourth quarter does not mean teachers are not here for their students.

Larissa Jerke, counselor By Claire Fumall

"We're in this together."

These are the words that ninth grade counselor Larissa Jerke said about the COVID-19 pandemic. Jerke has been using the ability of technology to reach out to students and staff to make a positive difference.

"I'm just trying to use my resources in any way that I can because I know that we're living in different times right now, and so to try to stay positive and to try to just keep our minds occupied in other ways instead of just being depressed; you know we don't want to go there."

Jerke said that one day she put on *Google Classroom* different colored hearts that had different meanings. All the students had to do was tap which heart they were feeling and she would know based on the color.

"So they didn't have to say anything and students reached out to me and we were able to have conversations. I actually called a couple of the parents and we were able to talk through things and just to provide some help that they need."

She said she has been doing her teaching and counseling online, which is completely new to her and very different from the normal face-to-face encounters she normally has.

"There is always somebody that you can connect with. I just don't want the kiddos or the staff to feel like they're alone. Just to reach out if they feel they need something or someone, whether it's an emotional need

or a physical need. Whatever it is."

Julie Hanen, social studies teacher

By Kennedy Page

When we are limited by physical barriers, sometimes encouragement can be monumental. With changing times, life can be unsure for many physically, but also mentally.

Social studies teacher Julie Hanen knows this and has taken action online. Her life has changed just like every other person, but also as an educator, mother, and a daughter. Other than helping her family that is at a health risk, she wants to reach out to those she wouldn't be able to help in the traditional sense during a pandemic.

"I try to encourage my students to keep up with the work being offered to them and to not get overwhelmed. I don't worry too much about being

goofy if I made a video because I am sure that I am silly in class, too," she remarked.

This is about maintaining a sense of support online. To continue to keep that hope gives hope to others by making sure they feel cared for.

"I hope that some students who may otherwise feel discouraged will read a post I make or a video I share and decide to keep working in my class and also in their others," said Hanen.

She keeps up positivity understanding that even with many missing elements of a normal classroom environment, students can still have hope. The goal is to create a learning environment that reassures the students when other things are so different.

When you have someone to tell you "you will get through this" when no one else is, sometimes that is all it takes.



Julie Hanen/Self Submission

ECONOMICS TEACHER JULIE HANEN supports staying safe during COVID-19.