



Tusker Nation

SOMERS CENTRAL SCHOOL DISTRICT NEWS
FOR SCSD FAMILIES

Somers Schools from a Distance

Intermediate Students Use Online Learning System



Ten-year old triplets Caleb, Jake, and Liam Kandel do schoolwork using the Teams learning management system.

The COVID-19 pandemic abruptly changed everything in Somers schools. The distance learning curve was steep, and the need for new systems quickly became apparent. One of those needs was for a learning management system for elementary students, originally scheduled to start this coming fall.

“Constant broken power point links and forms were causing stress and frustration in my household,” says Amanda Kandel, who has triplet sons in fifth grade at Somers Intermediate School. “It was very hard to keep track of who had done what assignments and what was turned in without going into their computers or checking in with the teacher directly.”

A learning management system (LMS) is an online platform that allows for streamlined communication, assignments, feedback, and also acts as a hub to access other online resources. The high school and middle school have been using the LMS Schoology for a year and a half, with positive feedback from teachers and students.

When it came time to choose an LMS for the younger students, many factors were considered. First and foremost, younger students need a system that is easy to use so they can rely less on their parents. Schoology is a sophisticated platform with many useful features that require a higher-level of tech savvy. SIS decided to use Teams, an LMS that is already part of the district’s package with Microsoft.

“A learning management system provides a way to build, foster and sustain learning experiences for students,” says Liz Turner, SIS principal. “Microsoft Teams is creating ease of access, greater independence for our students, and a better connection with their teachers.”

SIS has been using Teams for only two weeks, but it is already simplifying and improving distance

learning for students and teachers.

"Since Teams is a Microsoft platform, all PowerPoints, Word documents and forms are live within the system, so students access them easily," says fifth-grade teacher Felicia Salamone. "Students can view videos, play Kahoot or do a Flipgrid on their homepage. They can find all of their assignments organized by subject with attached resources on their class page and they can easily send us a chat to communicate or ask for help."

"I downloaded the app on my phone," says Amanda Kandel, "And I can check each of my kids' accounts and make sure they are getting the assignments turned in, getting the feedback from their teachers and staying on top of their Zoom calls. No LMS is perfect, but the implementation of Teams, coupled with live interaction with their teachers has created a more engaging learning environment in these unprecedented times."

Primrose Elementary School is piloting Teams now with a small group of teachers and students, with full implementation planned for early June. The Primrose LMS will be structured slightly differently, using Teams to access the app Seesaw, which is designed for the youngest of students.

Virtual Show, Real Talent



Water Refraction still life by sophomore Daniel Turner in the SCSD Virtual Art Museum. Click image to enter museum.

When you can't go to the annual SCSD Festival of the Arts, the festival comes to you. This year the district-wide art show was held in a virtual museum. Students from kindergarten through 12th grade submitted work they completed at home.

"The K-12 Arts Department wanted to celebrate all of the hard work done by students as well as instructors with regards to the arts," says department leader Angela Holder. "Now more than ever, artists are positioned to express, impact and frame the future of our world in every industry."

Sophomore Daniel Turner says the show was important to him both to display his art, and to share inspiration with others. He says the art he created from home taught him a valuable lesson about his work.

"The water refraction project showed me," says Turner, "that I could still create interesting artwork at home. In fact, it was almost better at home. I had the freedom to take my photos anywhere I wanted. I had both inside my home and outdoors to explore different locations for photographs."

There was never a question of whether the art show would go on, just a question of how Holder created the museum using Power Point slides, with clickable "rooms" arranged by school and artist. Visitors to the virtual show start at the front of the "museum" and can proceed through in order, or choose their own path.

"I love it," says parent Jill Schantz. "What a beautiful way to display and showcase our many artists in Somers. Thank you for making sure these creative individuals were recognized. Every slide brought a huge smile to my face!"

The Key to Helping Others



Sun Graham shows the key chain creations she is selling to raise money for COVID-19 relief funds.

Sun Graham and her fellow Somers High School seniors are missing out on many exciting rites of passage because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Like many others, Sun is spending her unexpected free time helping people who are less fortunate. We asked Sun about the motivation and efforts behind her key chain fundraiser.

Why did you start this fundraiser?

I started this project with three goals in mind: to pursue my passion for art, give back to seniors, and to raise money for COVID-19 relief. Since school work is minimizing as the year comes to a close, I wanted to use my time efficiently, while also doing something I enjoy. These key chains are a product that is widely universal for people in the U.S., and they show school pride! I have always enjoyed making others happy, whether it be through a big or small gesture, such as a key chain; every little thing counts.

Do you have any personal connection to the effects of the pandemic and the toll it has taken?

I am so thankful to be privileged enough to be able to keep myself in a safe environment at home, and that is one of my main motivations to give back to the millions at risk. I was once asked during this project why I don't just keep more of the profits for myself, and I am lucky enough to not have to worry about my income's stability, my health risk or having a safe home to stay at. I think sometimes I get caught up in the bubble of my privilege, but every day I am pushing myself to reflect on the scale of my problems in comparison to other areas outside of our town.

How do you make the key chains?

The key chains are fun process, but a long one. I first have to hand draw the key chain design, and color it in, which can take up to two hours just for one! Then, I have to bake them in the oven in order for the plastic to shrink down. Afterwards, I spray the key chains with acrylic sealant to prevent paint bleeding, seal a second time with UV resin, for durability, and then attach the key chain clasps. For the final steps, I place the key chain in its packaging, hand-write the note and address, and deliver to the post office. I have to keep myself organized through excel sheets, or else I would be so confused.

How are sales?

Sales have been great, and have exceeded my expectations! I have made over 30 sales with only having the shop open for a week. So far I have raised over \$250 in profit, and I am excited to see it keep growing.

What specific organizations will you give funds?

I want to donate to several organizations that are each tackling a separate sector of COVID-19 relief. Some that come to mind are the Partnership With Native American's coronavirus emergency response fund, the National Domestic Workers Alliance' Coronavirus Care Fund, and One Fair Wage Emergency Fund. These are just a few examples of the organizations where I feel my donation could help indigenous groups, frontline workers and tipped workers. My goal is to make 100 sales so I have a sizable donation to give to several organizations.

"Sing" a Song for Students



Missing their students, the teachers in the Somers Music Department put together this uplifting performance of "Sing" by Joe Raposo. Intermediate school band teacher Ricky Myint even got his wife in on the act with her saxophone. Click the image to watch the video.

Compete Without the Meet



Somers athletes participated in a first-of-its-kind virtual track meet with Arlington at the end of April. Somers Track and Field Coach Jesse Arnett organized the competition with his father, who is the Arlington Track and Field coach. Dubbed the "Tusker Quarantine Invitational," 234 athletes in seventh-12th grade competed over the course of three days. Events included the broad jump, multi-event, basketball toss, and the 200 meter, 400 meter, 800 meter, and one mile.

"We used technology and shared documents," says Jesse Arnett. "As a way for athletes to stay safe while also satisfying their desire for competition."

For results, click [here](#). Congrats to all who competed!

A Poem a Day



*"I thank you,
For the countless hours of playing
For your strings holding after days"*

Campbell Sternberg

*"I am from deep throws in end zones
and a loving family that takes care of
me."*

Luke Duffy

Students in English Language Arts classes at Somers Middle School have been learning from a distance, but that doesn't mean they haven't been busy reading, writing, thinking and learning. Over the past few weeks, students have collectively composed and revised thousands of poems in addition to their reading work.

"I really am happy with my final poems," says Vince Mooren. "I opened up more about me than I think I ever have. I decided to take the leap. That is what poetry is supposed to be. Maybe because I won't see my classmates I was able to post them, I don't know."

"Our students are risk-takers, curious and creative so when we asked them to compose poetry during this pandemic, they took on the challenge," says ELA teacher Kirstin Reynolds. "Their writing reflects their wisdom, concern for the world, and understanding of what is important—family, friends, health, love. They never cease to amaze us with the beauty and originality of their work."

In order to provide an larger audience for their verse, teachers held virtual poetry celebrations and students were able to experience each other's poems. Some of these poems will be posted on the SCSD Facebook page with the "Poem of the Day" project. Click [here](#) to like us on Facebook. Scroll through the page to read the wonderful poetry and see what else is going on in the Somers Central School District.

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