

## **Wichita Public Schools "Tools of Engagement" video series**

On March 17, 2020, Kansas Governor Laura Kelly announced that Kansas schools would be closed for in-person learning for the remainder of the school year in an effort to fight the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

This resulted in the students and staff of the Wichita Public Schools moving to remote learning via computer. There were the inevitable struggles in implementing this in our district of 50,000 students; lack of technology for all students and a lack of experience with remote learning for our students and staff. Luckily our technology department was able to restructure a previous plan to upgrade technology for students and reallocated existing computers and tablets to make sure that all students had access to technology.

Our teachers rallied and found creative ways to connect with students and build and maintain relationships with them in those early days of the school shutdown. Despite this, there were several local and national news stories that claimed that students were not learning due to wide-spread school closures and the quick pivot to remote learning, something that we at Wichita Public Schools knew was not the case in our experience.

As a means of combatting the negative impressions regarding remote learning, we reached out to several of our teachers who were finding creative ways to adapt lessons to remote learning and asked them to create short videos detailing what they were doing in their virtual classrooms.

We contacted a variety of teachers from elementary and secondary schools as well as specials teachers who taught music, art and even ceramics virtually. The teachers who participated did so on their own time and submitted camera phone videos which we uploaded to our district's YouTube channel.

We called the video series "WPS Tools of Engagement." The videos were promoted on the district's Facebook and Twitter social media sites and those posts linked to the YouTube playlist. See the playlist here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=avoHPHVQmb0&list=PLM17efy4thkGQX8U8rNVSMBKv2GXStKPV>

A total of 20 teachers participated in the video series which ran from April 27 through June 12, 2020.

While the intent of the video series was for teachers to show the Wichita and WPS community how they were connecting with students during remote learning, an added benefit was many of the videos contained helpful tips that other teachers could, and did, incorporate in their classes such as new ways to incorporate education software into the classroom and lesson planning tips.

It was especially gratifying that our teachers were willing to take their own time to create these videos which showed their pride in our district and in what they had been able to

achieve in an unprecedented public health emergency that required them to completely change their methods of teaching.