

February 2021

OnCall

ready-to-use NEWS

Celebrate virtual learning

No two schools in America look the same this school year — but one thing they all have in common is that learning looks different from ever before, and many schools are partially (or completely) offering learning in a virtual environment.

Students are still learning, and that is something to celebrate. Just as we share our joys and achievements during an in-person learning year, we can share them during this remote learning year. Still, it will require expanding your communications team to include parents, family members and students themselves.

Capturing stories about student learning now requires some creative thinking. It won't be as easy, but they are just as important, if not more so.

Lakeville Area Schools in Minnesota (<https://isd194.org>) found a way to crack open the doors to its classrooms and share everyday learning successes through the “What I Learned This Week” feature.

Stephen Rydberg, Communications Specialist for Lakeville Area Schools, said that the feature was born out of a simple idea: How do we better highlight our kids? Stephen and his colleague, Grace Olson, were already spending time in all of the Lakeville school buildings. They decided to start with a simple question — “What did you learn this week?” — and see what kind of quotes or footage they could capture. He said that the benefits of the feature have included more online engagement and appreciation from teachers.

How to start the “What I Learned This Week” feature

Your feature could be a video, an audio clip, or a written quote. If you go with a written quote, make sure you capture a photo of the child, too.

Stephen said that he and Grace do not prompt or script the children they interview. They simply ask the question and record the response. Of course, sometimes it takes asking a few times to really get a good response, but the key is to capture the authentic words of the child. Each interview takes only 2-3 minutes.

Before showing up to film, the Lakeville team lets the school principals know they are coming so that the principal can work with teachers to identify a couple of students to interview. They also track which schools and grade levels they are featuring, so they are able to get a good cross-representation of the district.

The completed videos include a Photoshop background that was imported into Adobe Premiere Pro software. Your video production could be more or less fancy. See sample videos: <https://fb.watch/2PC74oBMAL/>.

For subscription information, contact WSSDA at (800) 562-8927 or (360) 493-9231.

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This feature could work at your school. Start small — maybe 1-2 times per month — and consider making it a weekly feature that your audience will look forward to seeing.

Six more creative ways to celebrate virtual learning on social media

These ideas were curated and compiled by two #SocialSchool4EDU leaders; Heidi Feller, Chief Inspirational Officer, and Stephanie Sinz, Chief People Officer, who have daily, hands-on experience with school social media.

We've made it easy to share these ideas with your staff. Download all six virtual learning ideas on this handy PDF: <https://socialschool4edu.respond.ontraport.net/celebrate-virtual-learning>.

Elementary School Ideas

Idea 1: Parent or guardian involvement is key at the elementary school level. First, communicate with your families and remind them of your district's social media channels. This could be done through email or through your school newsletter(s). Teachers can also communicate directly with their classrooms.

Next, ask those teachers to make submitting a photo part of some class assignments*. They can then forward those photos to you, for inclusion on social media, with a brief description of the assignment.

Idea 2: This idea will also require some family involvement. Ask guardians to snap photos of everyday virtual learning routines. This could include the Pledge of Allegiance, an at-home P.E. class, or even a brain-break activity. Keep it simple. Small moments captured in a photo really resonate with your community.

Middle School Ideas

Idea 3: Middle school students might be a bit hesitant to showcase their learning, but that doesn't mean you can't gather content from these tech-savvy kids.

It's simple: "Show and Tell." Ask teachers to require their students to submit a photo or video demonstrating what they're learning. Maybe it's reciting a poem in a foreign language or a book recommendation. Band practice? Ask your musicians to send you a 15-second video. Science labs, writing assignments, and fun challenges highlight middle schoolers in all their glory.

High School Ideas

Idea 4: The high school experience is still happening, even if your district has transitioned to virtual learning. How about celebrating seniors and their future plans?

You could also post about student clubs and extracurriculars that are still taking place, even if those activities have been moved to the virtual environment.

Idea 5: One way that teachers engage their high school students is through group learning. So ask your students to submit a photo or video of them working "together."

Idea 6: Just like with elementary and middle school students, make photos and videos part of the assignment. With high school students, you can get even more creative! For example, ask

your history students to record a commercial about a specific time in history or compose a rap song involving biology concepts.

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**Be sure that students and parents know photos from school assignments may be shared on social media.*

Contributed by Andrea Gribble. Andrea's passion is helping schools recognize their daily awesomeness and sharing that story with the world. She's built a team that celebrates hundreds of schools across the country! #SocialSchool4EDU provides full social media management, personally coaches social media teams and individuals, and offers a vibrant online community that provides ongoing professional development for school social media champions.