



Forest Lake orchestra teacher Poji Schreiber conducts an online lesson.

Distance learning challenges area teachers

Technology, collaboration playing taught. distance learning, I thought about ment." teachers who are in their first feeling," said Kyla Johnson, who teaches a Spanish immersion sixth grade class at Forest Lake Elemen-

unique challenge for area teach- said. "You can't just give them a ers who had set lesson plans for worksheet; you have to provide classrooms full of students. Sud- decent directions so students denly their classrooms are empty know what to do. You have to be because of the stay-home order, mindful of the age of the student but the curriculum still must be you are working with, so you give them the support they need to un-'When we got the word about derstand and complete the assign-Before teachers began to miyear – I can't imagine how they're grate their lesson plans from classroom instruction to online education, they tried to collaborate with everyone involved in the process. "When we were first getting Here is how area teachers are hints that [distance learning] might be a possibility, we all started to come together to talk about how this would work," Johnson said. "The first step was to communicate with families to find out what they would need to make the best of this situation." Maher said teachers took that communication and worked with other teachers to form guidelines for instruction. "We got into small groups and everyone was adding ideas," she said. "Whether it was applications or technologies to use, people were sharing - and they weren't getting a stipend for being a tech person. They would make tutorials that said, 'This is easy, and here's how you do it.' I feel I could email or text someone, and they would support me and teach me how to share it with my students." And the teachers agreed that the key was not to focus on the curriculum, but to focus instead on the students. "The easiest thing to do was to keeping thinking about my students and figure out what was in their best interests," Johnson said. "We still wanted to get them ready for what is ahead of them, so my focus was on finding creative ways

Brother, sister die in murder-suicide

Hannah Davis News Editor

A brother and sister are dead following to the officers' arrival. a murder-suicide that The Washington County took place in a home in SWAT Team entered the Forest Lake on Saturday, building following the April 18. According to sound of a single gunshot Forest Lake Police Cap- and found Phillip dead tain Greg Weiss, at 8:15 due to a self-inflicted p.m., Forest Lake police gunshot wound. officers responded to an abandoned 911 call in were both in the home at the 18000 block of Hen- the time of the shooting, na Avenue North. When and were safetly escorted officers entered the home, out of the building by ofthey found 37-year-old Michelle Kresge dead in the basement bed- trying to determine the room with multiple gun- owner of the weapon that shot wounds. The suspect, 39-year-old Phillip

Kresge, Michelle's brother, fled to another building on the property prior

The mother and father ficers.

Investigators are still was used.

Try as they might, banks can't process business loans fast enough

Cliff Buchan Contributing Writer

Bankers in the greater Forest Lake area were than 22 million Amerscrambling last week as icans have filed for unsmall businesses flooded employment insurance their offices with applica- benefits. In Minnesota, tions for forgivable loans nearly 500,000 have filed under the Coronavirus for unemployment. Aid Relief and Economic Security Act, also known

shut-downs and a general downward turn in consumer spending. More

SBA efforts

The \$2.2 trillion as the CARES Act. By CARES Act was passed by Congress in late March and signed into law on March 27. The SBA began releasing funds on April 3. Funds were allocated under PPP to help businesses keep employees on the payroll. It is one of two SBA programs that were rolled out or expanded to address the economic crisis. The Economic Injury Disaster Loan Program is the second. The CARES Act allocated \$10 billion to EIDL to provide emergency grants of up to \$10,000 for small businesses. The Paycheck Protection Program has been a critical lifeline to struggling businesses, Zaruba and Isaacson said. Under the PPP, a business can apply quickly and smoothly with reduced red tape for loans to cover payroll, health insurance, rent and utilities. Loans carry a 1% interest rate, but are fully forgivable to cover the initial eightweek period. Loans are designed for businesses based in the United States with 500 or fewer employees. Loan balances that exceed the eight weeks of payroll and expenses will see repayment delayed for six months. PPP loans are based on 2019 salary amounts. In calculating a loan,

Submitted photo

key roles

John Wagner Sports Editor

Editor's note: This is the first story in a two-part series focused on distance learning practices in area schools. Next week's story will look at how distance learning affects area

students and parents. On the first day of distance learning, Forest Lake orchestra teacher Poji Schreiber enjoyed the challenge.

"The first day I thought, 'This is new and different," Schreiber said. "On the second day, I was in tears. This is so sad; I miss making music with my students in person. It's different, and it's a challenge."

Schreiber is not alone. Teachers from the Forest Lake school system, as well as from Lakes International Language Academy and North Lakes Academy, all her said. "Also, on a snow day you are navigating uncharted waters may have students who can't do brought about by distance learning. Schools around the state have been closed since mid-March in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the decree by Gov. Tim Walz to stay home.

"I get kind of emotional sometimes," LILA social studies teacher did have some resources put to-Erin Maher said about the decision to close the schools. "When we first got the word, we were approaching spring break, and at tinue teaching our content rather that time in the year, everyone teachers and students - is ready for spring break to refresh, to get ready for the final push of the school year.

"So when we came back to school and had our first video conferences, I just wanted to hug all my students and say, 'What's going on? How is your life?"

News

bringing their classroom curriculum into their students' homes.

Preparing the lessons

Prior to the COVID-19 outbreak, area schools dabbled in distance learning by preparing curriculum for snow days. But teachers agree that the current situation is far different.

"Snow day work was meant to be a stop-gap assignment," Mathe work because they don't have power or access to the things they need to complete the work. It was meant to give those who have access to the assignment an opportunity to complete it."

Johnson agreed, adding: "We gether for snow days. But this is such an extended period of time, we knew we would have to conthan teach something for one random snow day here or there."

There was one advantage the preparation for snow days provided: Teachers better understood best practices involved with remote lessons.

'We learned that the key is to prepare a lesson that a student can easily understand without face-to-Distance learning provided a face contact with teachers," Maher

April 16, however, the \$349 billion authorized by the CARES Act for Small Business Administration allocation had been exhausted.

From Scandia to Forest Lake and on to Wyoming, it was the same story for local community banks that found dozens of hurting small businesses seeking help to stay afloat.

"They are getting slammed," said Greg Isaacson, president and chief executive officer of Security State Bank of Marine as officials in the bank's four locations handled loan applications.

As the federally-backed Paycheck Protection Program funding spigot ran dry, officers of First State Bank of Wyoming said nearly 50 loan applications were still in the works. It was a similar story for Isaacson.

'We took our first loan application on April 6," he said. During the following 10 days, Isaacson said the bank through its offices in Marine on St. Croix, Scandia, Forest Lake and Lindstrom processed "dozens and dozens" of loans for "several" millions of dollars.

It's all happened quickly as part of the federal government's response to the global COVID-19 pandemic that has crippled millions of businesses due to mandated

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Hannah Davis | 763-233-0709 | hannah.davis@apgecm.com



Distance teaching

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to keep teaching them the content they need, and make sure they looked forward to coming online every day."

Teaching the lessons

It is one thing to teach English or math via distance learning. But there are other subjects that do not lend themselves to that approach.

For example, how does an industrial arts teacher hold classes? How does a physical education class work? And how do orchestra teachers conduct a class when they can't get the band back together?

Schreiber said that, since group lessons are not possible, her focus has been on individual teaching.

"In the classroom we work on blending our sounds into music," she said. "It's like working as a team. But right now we're forced to work individually. When we are together, students can hear how the sounds come together. Right now, they can only hear their individual sounds. But that can be a positive: The students are working

on individual skills, like bow skills or making [notes] s o u n d better." Jen

Wagner, who teaches physical education at

Forest Lake High School, said online instruction has forced her and her fellow gym instructors to such as Fitbit.

gle I have had is making this week." sure we give our students some enrichment without overloading them," she said. "Some students have more equipment, and some have more motivation. But we miss that connection, where we can physically observe them and instruct them."

Maher teach Spanish immersion classes, which present another challenge: How do you provide instruction as well as foreign language development without one-onone contact?

"Written-wise, that hasn't changed much. But the speaking component has changed; we just can't get as much of that in," Maher said. "I give video instructions three times a week, so they hear me speaking Spanish. And they have to reply with a video in Spanish once a week. But unless I make them do five videos a week, the speaking is hard to replicate. And teachers become more holds an online class from her home. five videos is too much to comfortable with techask."

Johnson said teaching the classroom. an immersion language to make sure the curricu-

lum is cov-"My favorite time ered while also spendis when I get to ing enough see my students' time defaces online. student's But it's not the fluency in the target same as being language. together in the And that is not easy. "Nor-

mally we

spend mul-

tiple hours

– Kyla Johnson, sixth grade teacher, Forest Lake Elementary

classroom."

language each day, so I'm things for our students." trying to find opportunities for my students to distance learning is it al-

ities from fitness apps Schreiber said. "It was very interesting. I look "The biggest strug- forward to trying it again

Learning the lessons

Recently Schreiber gave her junior high orchestra students a unique assignment: Conduct an interview with their orchestra instrument.

Students were asked Both Johnson and to learn the "name" of their instrument as well as such details as their instrument's favorite food, hobbies, hidden talents, and favorite piece of music to play.

> "I was trying to give them an assignment that would make the work fun, to get them to smile," Schreiber said. "As teachers we all want to give our students work that they enjoy, and work that helps them learn. My hope is that this assignment would help connect them better with their instrument."

That creativity is one of the positives to emerge nology and its place in

Teachers also say they class means teachers have have noticed a greater level of connection between the entire learning community, be it students, parents, or administrators.

"[Our administration veloping a has] done a great job of supporting us, whether it's compiling resources, reaching out to families, and things like that," Johnson said. "They are making the best of this situation. I hope that it's obvious that the teachers and administration are doing everything they in the target can to make the best of

Another advantage to speak Spanish and keep lows students at different



from the pandemic, as Erin Maher, who teaches social science classes at Lakes International Language Academy,

schedule. In short, when because we can't expect rewards and drawbacks the bell rings at the end of the entire class to show to virtual learning. the day, classes are over. up at a specific date and

That's not the case in time," Maher said. the virtual world.

a lot of work outside the read non-verbal cues and work for a student who 'school day," Wagner said. context to determine if has, say, high anxiety or "It's easy to get caught up students understand the other situations where in that. When I go to bed, subject. my mind keeps running. day."

requires more flexibility ed a thousand different disagree on the success because internet access ways, but you tell more of virtual learning, they may be shared in house- when you are engaged agree on their favorite holds with more than one in person. You can read part of the school day in child, or older students nonverbal cues and reac- this new education sysmay be handling other tions to see how students tem. responsibilities such as are responding, deterproviding for the needs mine if they understand when I get to see my stuof younger siblings. And the subject, or if they are dents' faces online," Johnhigh school students may interested in the subject. son said. "But it's not the have taken extra work to I think that's a struggle same as being together in help families in need. 'We have to be flexible subject."

is a more defined work with video conferencing,

It's the same feeling you teaching is creating re- this has also taught me have before the first day lationships with kids, that the concept that 'stuof school, when you want which allows you to ob- dents learn the most in a to think of everything be- serve them," she said. social setting' is true, and fore you start. But now I "It's fun to see kids, to see that it's extremely hard to have that feeling every their faces and have that build that social setting in interaction. An email or the virtual world." Distance learning also a text can be interpret-

In short, there are both

Submitted photo

"Online learning has a place for some schools Wagner said she also and for some students," "I find myself doing misses the opportunity to Maher said. "It would they can't come to a "I think a big part of school physically. But

While teachers may

"My favorite time is

be creative.

"Everybody is putting workouts online for free, so if you have access to video," she said. "I spend a lot of time, whether it's talking to colleagues or watching videos, trying to find ideas to engage the kids. You don't want to do something that a kid will see and then say, 'This is lame.' But it's also hard to get feedback when you are not physically together."

Wagner said she and other instructors have demonstrated activities with videos. For "homework" she has asked students for written logs or for screenshots of activ-

practicing their skills," she said. "I use a resource ferent paces. called Flipgrid almost daily; each morning I more time, they have post a question in Spanish for my students, and son said. "If students go they record an answer to that question. I like this resource because other students can then see the videos and respond to them, so it's a good way to practice both listening and speaking skills."

ing software may not be as productive as classroom learning, but at least it provides a viable far from perfect, howalternative.

held my first group or- is that, when they are in chestra lesson online," the school building, there

skill levels to work at dif

"If a student needs that opportunity," Johnthrough the material quickly, they can do more work - and have more free time. ... There are times, especially in math and science, where I have *'extension* questions, which are extra questions Using apps and meet- I put out to challenge students who need something more and different."

Distance learning is ever. One disadvantage "Last Wednesday I for teachers at all levels

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