

VIEWPOINTS

'Online learning' is tough on teachers, too

BY KARL GRUBAUGH

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Like almost every other teacher across the country, I've been thrust into delivering "online learning" while we shelter in place to try to reduce the ferociousness of the nasty, stubborn coronavirus, which strikes with vicious indiscretion.

So I sit on a comfy chair in my living room, my laptop fired up, camera on, a Zoom meeting zooming - and I do what I can to make Advanced

Placement economics and journalism interesting and engaging and important for 165 students sitting in 165 different living rooms and bedrooms and dens and kitchens. They would much rather be sitting in rooms 811 and 514 at Granite Bay High School.

My students keep telling me it's going great. I don't know if that's because they're telling me the truth, or they're just incredibly nice and respectful and don't think I can handle the truth. You'll forgive me if my vanity results in me going with

Option No. 1 - but, despite their encouragement, it's just not the same.

I got an email from an econ student earlier this week. I'd assigned an online quiz, and I put a clock on it - students had 15 minutes to complete 10 quick multiple-choice questions.

Easy.

But this particular student, a terrific young woman who epitomizes responsibility, sort of nervously explained that she'd gone over the time limit because she'd opened the quiz earlier in

the day but hadn't actually started it until later. She just wanted me to know in case her quiz came up invalid.

She politely thanked me, and she apologized for the confusion.

And then, before concluding her note, she wrote: "Also, miss you," with a little sad-faced emoji at the end of the sentence ... :(

No worries on the quiz, I replied, and then I added: "I miss you guys too. Tons."

My students have lost so much already, and there's more stuff being scratched off the list every day.

But I've lost out too. I was looking forward to spring break, of course, but the home stretch of every school year is a wonderful, crazy rush of

youthful determination and joy. Students cranking up to get ready for AP exams, and exhilaration when they're over. The excitement and celebration of prom. Senior picnic. Finishing off the last issue of the student newspaper, and distributing it with pride. Grad practice. Senior breakfast. Graduation.

Every school year, when I walk off the football field after our Saturday morning commencement ceremony, I experience a wistful sense of satisfaction combined with relief at the imminent arrival of a summer break and a wee bit of anticipation for the chance to meet and work with the next group of rising seniors who will soon enough be filling the seats in my classroom.

I'm supposed to retire in

10 weeks, so things were going to be different this spring - but I had embraced it, and I'd told my seniors I was one of them. I'm graduating with you! Class of 2020 rocks!

Now, we just wave at each other over the internet.

Although I enjoy seeing the friendly faces of my "econ crew" and the newspaper "Gazette gang" on Zoom every couple of days, it's just not the same.

I'll carry on, however, and so will they.

But I still miss them.

Tons.

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