**“Virtually” Anything Is Possible**

Anti-Tobacco & Vaping Instruction

By: Andrew Martin

The Covid-19 pandemic has done no favors to the world of education. Reaching students and engaging them has been challenging, frustrating, and deflating at times. The wheel had to be redesigned and educators had to become technology pros overnight. The platforms were endless: Zoom, Google Hangouts, Google Classrooms, Bit-Moji Classes, Microsoft Teams, and much more. Learning these platforms and the methods for reaching students, families, and communities was challenging, but dare I say a blessing in disguise?!?

Consider the possibilities that have become available to educators when it comes to instructing and presenting content. We’ve been given the ability and technology to use our expertise to tap into students learning, even when they’re not directly in front of us. There’s no substitute for live instruction, but the Covid-19 pandemic has forced us to add additional tools to our teaching belts. Teachers have become even more heroic through the work they’ve done over the past several months. I’ve been blessed with amazing people around me that have provided genius ideas, resources, and technology to make a meaningful and impactful difference in our community of Germantown, TN.

I started the 2020-2021 school year as Germantown Municipal School District’s (GMSD) new School Health Supervisor. A daunting task to take on in the height of a global pandemic. My role from day one was Covid tracking and anything that pertained to the health, safety and well-being for the students in our district. I was driven to not only keep our students and community safe, but to deliver opportunities and initiatives that were meaningful and impactful for our students and staff. One of those initiatives was our “No Smoke November” anti-tobacco & vaping challenge. The initiative spanned the entire month of November and provided our teachers with curriculum and resources to have meaningful and important conversations with our students.

The No Smoke November initiative consisted of an art contest that was available district wide. Students had the opportunity to create a poster, magazine cover, or meme that centered around anti-tobacco measures and messages. We had over 100 submissions and lots of beautiful pieces of artwork to select from. We were able to select a top 3 and use them as posters across our district to promote our message of being a smoke and tobacco free district.

The message and communications didn’t end with the art contest. We realized that we wouldn’t be able to have a huge gathering of people to share in a community night to discuss these important topics or assemblies to inspire our student, so we thought about the technology that we had available and created something special. We created a virtual town-hall that allowed students, teachers, parents and community members to visit. The page had videos, articles, links, resources, and surveys to provide valuable feedback. The virtual town-hall was a great success and something we’ll have in place moving forward.

I encourage all educators to look at the possibilities and see what’s possible when you combine technology, creativity, passion, and curriculum. The successes we’ve experienced are not anomalies that can’t take place anywhere else. It all starts with you! Feel free to look over the following resources and reach out to me for any guidance or help! You can do “virtually” anything you set your mind to!

**No Smoke November (art contest)**

<https://www.thephysedexpress.com/no-smoke-november.html>

**Anti-Tobacco Town-Hall**

<https://www.thephysedexpress.com/town-hall-anti-tobacco.html>

**Anti-Tobacco & Vaping Education**

<https://www.thephysedexpress.com/tobacco--vaping-education.html>

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