

Out until April 17, teachers, students begin distance learning

Sarah Claire Miller, Staff Writer

Editor's note: In keeping with social distancing guidelines, all interviews for this story were conducted via email, phone and FaceTime.

Teachers and students have begun distance learning now that schools are closed through at least April 17 to help stop the spread of COVID-19.

"It's a big undertaking to switch to distance learning," said U.S. History teacher David Burgess, who updated his teacher website with student resources last week. "Teachers across the nation are trying to completely reinvent our educational system on the fly. It should be very interesting to see what we can come up with."

Burgess said he misses school but not waking up at 6 a.m. every day.

"I love what I do," he said. "I love being around young people to learn and joke around with them. So, I miss it. Honestly, I feel like a big part of my life is gone, but I guess we all feel like that on some level right now."

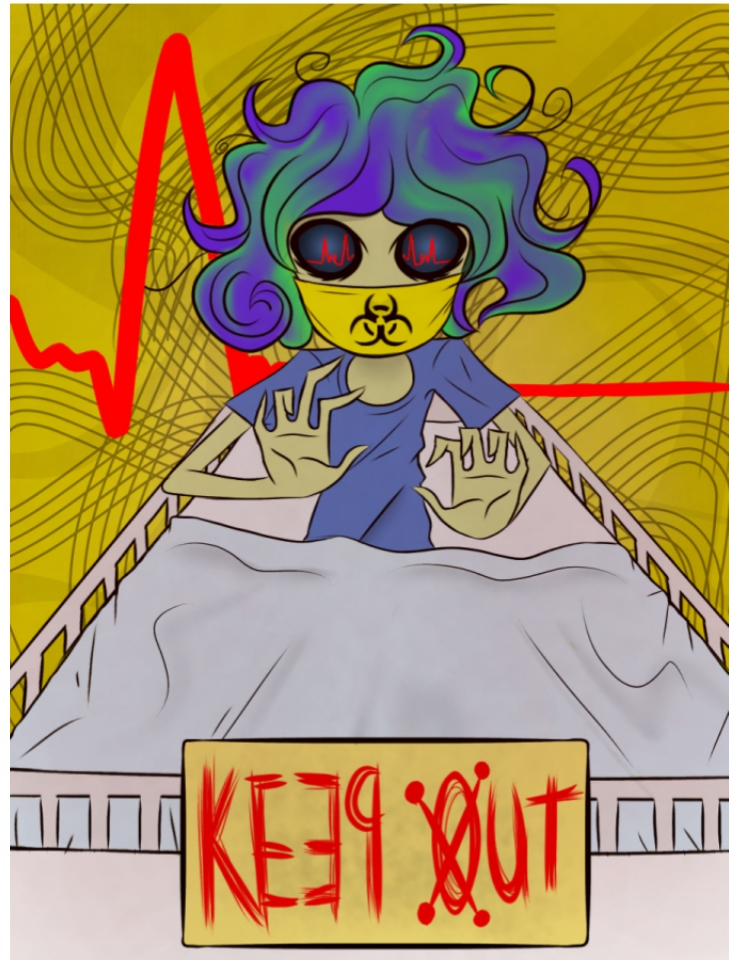
Science teacher Amber Smith said she feels the same way.

"I do miss being at school and seeing everyone," she said. "I like having a routine and being among my coworkers and Mustang family. I'm hoping everyone uses this time to spend with their families and gain a new appreciation of life."

Like Burgess and all teachers at Center Hill and across DeSoto County Schools, Smith spent last week preparing for distance learning.

"I have posted links to the A&P and Chemistry textbooks on my teacher webpage," Smith said, explaining that the resources include PowerPoints, practice quizzes and review questions. "The main goal is for all of my students to have access to any and all information that they will need moving further."

Abbey Grisham, a junior, is in Smith's first block Human A&P class. This week, she's been able to wear her PJs while working on assignments remotely.



Lacey Buckley

According to cdc.gov, "A novel coronavirus, named Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), was identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness first detected in Wuhan, China in 2019. The illness caused by this virus has been named coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)." In response to the pandemic and to stop the spread of COVID-19 in Mississippi, all public schools are closed through at least April 17.

"It's comfy and I miss everybody, but it's a lot less stressful," she said. "You can do everything on your own time and don't have to worry about teachers and rules and stuff like that."

Grisham has internet at home, but Assistant Principal Brenda Case said DCS is aware that not all students can get online.

"The district is preparing grade level and content related paper packets for students that do not have internet access," she said, adding that, "Everyone here at CHHS is first and foremost concerned with all of our students and their families safety, health and well being during this time."

A longtime educator, Case said she has never experienced or heard about a situation like this.

"It really is unprecedented to my knowledge," she said. "I am so proud of our school for taking on this challenging situation and working hard to provide the best opportunity for all of our students to remain connected, have opportunities to continue learning, and maybe most of all to know that they are being missed on the daily!"