

Kristal Sisson understands how being proactive towards coronavirus now could potentially help Mississippians later.

Like educators across the United States, Sisson, principal of Resurrection Catholic Middle and High School in Pascagoula, has had to help her school transition to online learning with little time to prepare. Sisson said managing her staff and students via online for weeks now has been quite an achievement.

"I think our staff has done an amazing job converting to online learning, but I will say this, part of the success was that we were proactive. People took the threat of not being at school very seriously and committed themselves to it--whether it was working over the weekend to meet with students or get supplies and materials," said Sisson. "We realize that we are a small school, so it's much easier to do online learning, and the clientele we serve has readily available internet access."

According to the National Center for Education Statistics, over 55 million students in 124,000 public and private schools in the U.S. have closed as a result of coronavirus. Moreover, the Jackson County Board of Supervisors reported that all schools in Jackson County are currently closed. Under the circumstances, teachers at many closed schools have begun using online learning to reach their students.

Chip Cole, senior civics and economics teacher at Resurrection Catholic Middle and High School, said, after a

brief hesitation, although online learning has been a struggle at times, we must accept change as it comes.

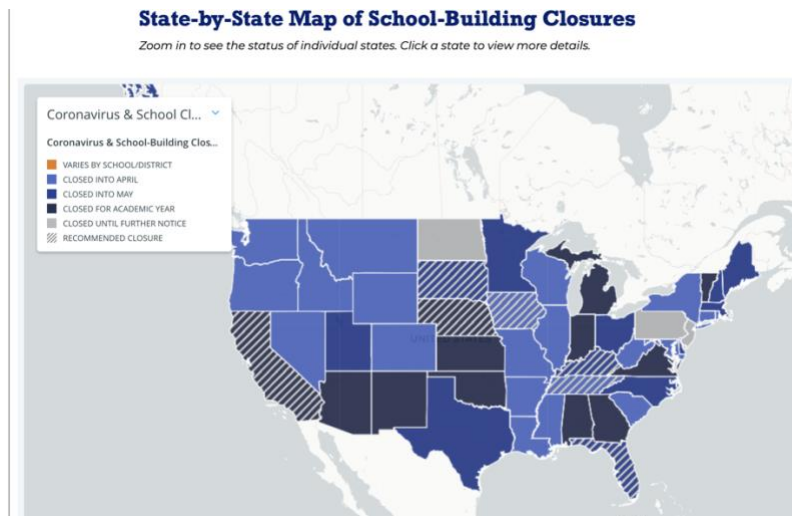
"I think it's important that we embrace how technology has changed over the years and integrate that into education as best as we can. While I don't feel that my current set up is as effective as my classroom discussion and lecture, I do feel like--given the circumstances--we are covering the bases as best we can."

The National School Public Relations Association believes that positive communication is critical to the success of a school. Sisson, Director of Administration for Resurrection Catholic School, said she has been diligent in communicating with her clientele.

"I have called every single family and talked to someone or left a message just checking in," said Sisson. "I've been sending out regular emails to our families via internet and also been doing school reach calls where we give families essential information."

For distance learning to be successful, outreach efforts by both administrators and teachers will continue as long as schools remain closed.

## Service Journalism Page



## Map: Coronavirus and School Closures

**Updated:** April 2, 2020, 5:50 p.m. ET



Currently, we are updating this page at least once a day on weekdays and at least once on the weekends.

The coronavirus pandemic has forced widespread school closures in the United States in an unprecedented disruption of K-12 schooling.

Use the map, charts, and table below to see detailed state-level information about school closures.

School closures refer to the shutdown of physical buildings and traditional, in-person instruction.

Learn more about [The Scramble to Move America's Schools Online](#) and how online learning is raising concerns about [data privacy](#), and [educational disparities](#).

You can find Education Week's [full coverage of the novel coronavirus and its impact on schools here](#).

**School closures due to coronavirus have impacted at least 124,000 U.S. public and private schools and affected at least 55.1 million students.**

There are at least 98,000 public schools and at least 34,000 private schools in the U.S., according to the National Center for Education Statistics. Those schools educate almost 50.8 million public school students and 5.8 million private school students.

1. These pictures goes along with the statistic I have in my news article. This is the website that I got everything from. <https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html>
2. Carol Olsen, a teacher at Resurrection Middle High School said the disadvantages of online learning was mainly for

veteran teachers due to the technology gap, making it harder to grade and test students.

3. Maureen Halbrook, a nurse at Singing River said hand washing, taking the trash out regularly, and not inviting people over are some of the things she has been practicing in her home to ensure a clean environment.

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Sources

Kristal Sisson

Chip Cole

Carol Olsen

Maureen Halbrook

Ashleigh Smith

[https://www.nspra.org/files/docs/GETTING IT RIGHT Foreword.pdf](https://www.nspra.org/files/docs/GETTING_IT_RIGHT_Foreword.pdf)

<https://www.co.jackson.ms.us/CivicAlerts.aspx?AID=472>

<https://www.edweek.org/ew/section/multimedia/map-coronavirus-and-school-closures.html>

Data/Research Page

1. Before I got my sources, I contacted Resurrection Catholic School.
2. This story was to showcase the improvement my community has made during this pandemic.
3. I found out about this story through my mother.
4. I got my coronavirus map from the CDC.gov page online.
5. I used CDC as my resource for the statistics I put in my news article.

## Interview Notes

**Kristal Sisson**

- Pascagoula, Mississippi
- Principal of Resurrection Catholic Middle High School
- Director of Administration of Resurrection Catholic School

Conducted a phone interview.

Me: "How has switching to online learning affected the communication skills between you and your staff?"

Kristal: "Communication has been excellent because we have a staff of 25 and so we communicate via text message groups and email and so far everyone has internet access of their homes."

Me: "How are you ensuring that teachers of properly getting their work hour in?"

Kristal: "Teachers were instructed to keep a time log of their hours spent in preparation for online learning, documenting their time when they speak with parents, students. Many of them are using applications like zoom, youtube and facebook live to record lessons."

Me: "Do you have any plans at the moment for the end of the school year?"

Kristal: "Our plan is to follow the director of the diocese of Biloxi says and right now the diocese is saying that we will more than likely be back at school April 20<sup>th</sup>. Of course they have freely admitted that that could change depending on the pandemic and how severe it is in our area."

Me: "What are your thoughts on online learning?"

Kristal: "I think our staff has done an amazing job converting to online learning, but I will say this, part of the success was that we were proactive. As soon as I went to the meeting the week before we went online, when I came back we started making plans immediately and people taking the threat of not being at school very seriously and committing themselves to it with working over the weekend to meet with students and get supplies and materials. Realizing that we are a small school and so that's much easier to do and the clientele we serve has readily available internet access."



Me: "Can you describe what you have been doing pertaining family outreach?"

Kristal: "One thing we did was contact WLOX and told them about how great our teachers were doing and our students and families, so WLOX came out to the school and did a story with the success we are having with virtual learning. I have called every single family and talked to someone or left a message just checking in. I've been sending out regular emails to our families via internet and also been doing school reach calls where we give families essential information."

Me: "Anything else you would like to add?"

Kristal: "I just think the success depends on the learning staff that you have. Our teachers deeply care about our students. I think one of the reasons we have been highly successful is because we don't state test. Our people are used to teaching in a college preparatory way, there's no end to learning. At public school, once state test is now out of the picture, the people have a different mentality."

**Chip Cole**

- Pascagoula, Mississippi
- Senior civics and economics teacher

Conducted a phone interview.

Me: "Advantages and disadvantages of online learning?"

Chip: "The advantages are that this is preparing my students for online learning in college that they will inevitably be introduced to and will be a part of. The disadvantage is only in the lack of time that we had to prepare for this."

Me: "How do you feel about online learning?"

Chip: "I think it's important that we embrace how technology has changed over the years and integrate that into education as best as we can. While I don't feel that my current set up is as effective as my classroom discussion and lecture I do feel like given the circumstances we are covering the bases as best we can."

Me: "Has this adaptation taught you anything about yourself as a teacher?"

Chip: "I think it has taught me that I am capable of planning better and it convinced me to relax and be more susceptible to change and more susceptible to error because of our reliance on technology."

**Carol Olsen**

- Pascagoula, Mississippi
- High school learning strategies and nutrition teacher

Conducted a text interview with her and she said the following pertaining to online learning.

"Advantages- easier to assign lessons, more engaging because this generation is more technologically advanced. Learning through online resources enables student's self-paced learning.

Disadvantages- Veteran teachers have a disadvantage due to the technology gap, grading is harder, testing is hard for me.

Online teaching is becoming more prevalent every day. You can get a college degree online and this is definitely preparing students for what it entails."

**Maureen Halbrook**

- Pascagoula, Mississippi
- Nurse at Singing River Hospital

Conducted a text interview as well. She said the following.

"Children have helped slow the process of spreading by being at home. People need to be taking this pandemic very seriously. I have been hand washing, taking the trash out regularly and not inviting people over as much."