



# the good news series

At first, Lexi Gardner was overwhelmed by the idea of converting her classroom courses to remote learning.

"I kept thinking there was no way," said the Lincoln High School English teacher.



But her outlook changed the more she dug into the challenge and collaborated with her colleagues. First, she identified the three or four essential learning objectives for each of her three courses: Oral Communications, Reading Ideas, and Multicultural Literature.

"After the essential learning objectives were established, other colleagues and I started making pacing guides and calendars, and labeling them to create a visual representation of what was needed to finish the school year strong," Gardner said. "I have always been a visual learner, so that has been helpful in this transition."

It's also helped her students.

"I use boxes and charts to help students see the flow, so they understand how what we did Monday connects to what we are doing Tuesday, and why all that matters for the final assignment. It isn't going to be perfect, and that is okay, but I have been trying to always ask myself, 'What is best for all my students?' That has helped a lot."

Gardner is still learning as she goes, just like teachers across Lincoln Public Schools, as well as families and students. She straddles the line between overwhelming her students with new material and making sure they learn what they need to know by the end of the school year. Communication also can be tricky.

"It's a fine line between too many emails to students and parents and just enough," she said. "I have already found some methods that work, but since I don't have my students in front of me, and I cannot read their body language and facial expressions to show me if I need to slow down or repeat something, I have to think through the materials, posts, and emails from the teacher, student, and parent perspectives."

She's already learned a few teaching strategies she'll use back in her physical classroom. For example, in Oral Communications, she's created online practices for formal outlining and research. That's usually something she talks students through as they take notes.

"So in a way, this change has helped me think differently about 'direct' instruction and finding ways to continually put students more in charge of their own learning."

Silver linings aside, Gardner acknowledges the most difficult part of remote learning: not seeing her students in person every day. She posts daily videos to help guide them through their work – but also to offer emotional support.

"I want them to know I see them, I care, and that while we cannot be together in our classroom, I am still here to help and remind them how incredible they are every day."

*This is part of an occasional series by LPS highlighting teachers who are adapting and finding innovative ways to teach through remote learning. Find more stories like this on the LPS website .*