

How Chesaning High School is Using Xello Outside the Classroom During Times of Uncertainty

Future readiness doesn't have to be put on hold just because school is not in session. Chesaning Union High School students can plan for college and career from home using Xello.

School districts across North America are working hard to keep students academically engaged while schools are closed to accommodate the need for social distancing as we all work to lessen the spread of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Career Navigator and Career and College Advisor, Erica Birkmeier, is thinking ahead to ensure the 500 Grades 9-12 students at Chesaning High School continue to prepare for the future—even when they're not in the classroom.

In September, the Saginaw ISD in Michigan rolled out future readiness software to help students explore college and career options. Birkmeier helped all freshman students at Chesaning High set up profiles and begin taking personality and learning style quizzes and exploring Xello's career Matchmaker feature.

They also have a career and college exploration program for juniors and seniors who have enough credits to participate. Eligible students can make it part of one of their trimester courses and go out in the community to job shadow. Part of the process includes logging into Xello to explore options before identifying an appropriate workplace for them.

Now that students are at home, Birkmeier is using Google Classroom to communicate with students about logging into Xello. She's also offering tips on using it while they're away from school. "I've let students know that if they're not sure what to do [while they're off], now would be a good time to do some exploration on Xello," she says.

This is also a good time for seniors to do virtual campus tours on Xello. You can get a pretty good idea of what a campus is like using this tool.

For juniors, she's recommending college and career exploration so they can consider making a plan for what they want to do when they graduate. "They can explore colleges or skilled trade opportunities," says Birkmeier.

She's also looking into grade-appropriate activities to recommend to the younger students at Chesaning. "Xello's a great platform because it has everything you need. It's just how you steer the group of students depending on their grade level and what's appropriate for them to be thinking about at this point in their education."

Some of the challenges of being outside the school include ensuring all students have access to the technology they need to access Google Classroom, Xello, and other online platforms. Birkmeier acknowledges that there are a "decent number" of students who may not have what they need. The school is working on getting device and laptops into the hands of students.

"Right now, I'm focusing on exploration with students. As this [social distancing] goes on, I'll mostly likely look into Xello lessons and tools. I'm really intrigued by the educational development plan portion of it. I think this is a good chance for kids to start making a master plan."

She notes that the Chesaning High School course guide has been loaded into Xello so students can look at the available courses and determine which courses might pertain to a particular career path.

Students Have Responded Well to Xello

Birkmeier says the feedback from students who onboarded with Xello at school has been overwhelmingly positive.

It's definitely very user friendly. It's almost like being on social media, but with a purpose. The career matches are always a big hit. The kids get thrilled with what comes up for them.

"What's nice about Xello is that you can see which questions you answered led you to the career being proposed."

She's grateful that students have a program like this to maintain a sense of normalcy and control during this uncertain time, including optimism about the future.

"Working on Xello is something constructive and productive they can do, inside and outside the classroom. We're glad to have access to it."



ABOUT HEATHER

Heather Hudson is a Toronto-based freelance writer and journalist. She specializes in content marketing, corporate storytelling and good old-fashioned journalism. You can read some of her work in The Toronto Star and learn more about her at heatherhudson.ca.