

Private schools' fast pivot to online learning

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Taylor van Loben Sels, a junior at Christian Brothers High School, wasn't sure how her school could transition her favorite classes to remote learning after it announced it was closing.

But then her choir teacher instructed each student to send an online recording of themselves singing "This is Me" from the movie, "The Great Showman," so they could create an edited, multi-screen video of the class.

"It took a lot of different takes and recordings, but I thought it was pretty fun and creative, and I have never done that before," van Loben Sels said.

While Sacramento-area school districts will just begin their formal distance learning programs in the next few weeks, a month after schools announced closures to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, thousands of local private school students are already weeks into their online education.

Their teachers are using the online platform Zoom, learning new material and logging students into Google Classroom. While some public school teachers have also started that process, private schools transitioned to distance learning much earlier - some just days after official school closures.

How were those schools able to prepare their teachers and students so quickly?

There are the obvious answers: Providing resources for a much smaller student population is less daunting than serving 60,000 students in a school district. Public schools have to ensure that all students have an equitable opportunity to access their education online. And private schools often have donors on hand, and parents

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who pay anywhere between \$6,000 to \$25,000 in annual tuition.

FAST ACTION ON DISTANCE LEARNING

Many private schools, like Christian Brothers, closed their campuses on March 13 - the same day the Sacramento County Office of Education announced public school closures. The following Monday, Christian Brothers took one instructional day to assist faculty with moving to online platforms, and they began distance learning on Tuesday.

D'Niece Garcia-Hall, whose son Colton Hall is a graduating senior at Christian Brothers, said she was impressed with the school's quick turn around, but not surprised.

"We knew we would be one of the schools that would be ready for it," Garcia-Hall said. "Our school has been extremely conscientious about sending notes everyday from the teachers and communicating with the students."

Al-Arqam Islamic Preparatory School, which serves 463 students, hosted a one-day training to provide its staff with tools and knowledge of their new virtual learning model. Teachers familiarized themselves with Zoom and other online platforms that were already being used by staff and students.

long before schools announced closures.

Each of Christian Brothers' 1,157 students has an iPad and access to their textbook's digital material online. Elementary-aged Country Day students were able to take classroom devices home for the first time; the school serves more than 460 students.