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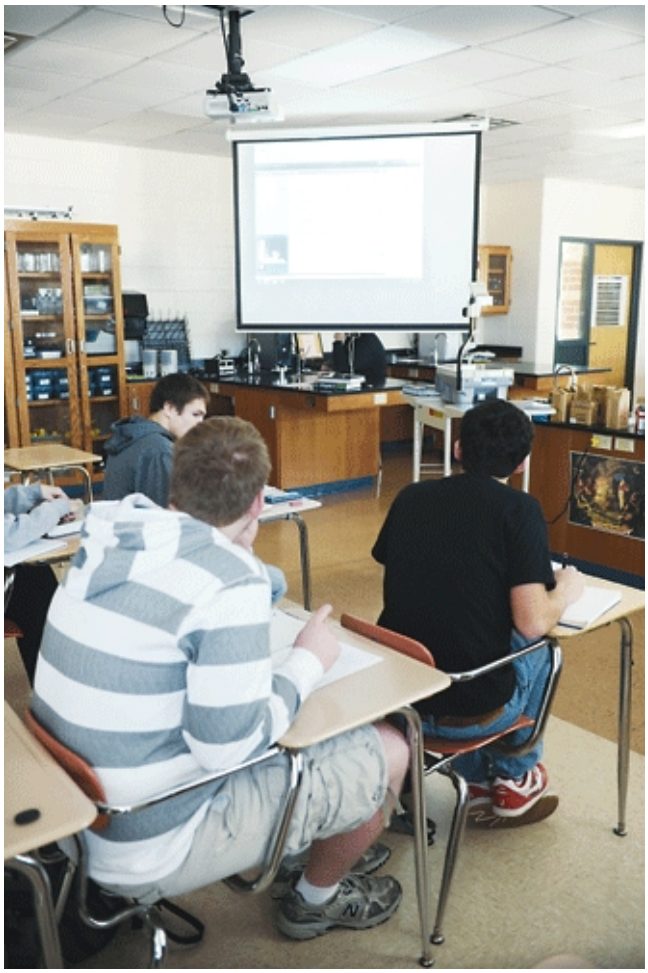

HER IMAGE IS SMALL on the big screen, but science teacher Tina Stauber is having a big impact on senior chemistry students who are taking a college-level course at Cedar Grove-Belgium High School. Stauber gives lectures and answers questions from her Sheboygan home, where she is recovering from surgery. *Photo by Sam Arendt*

Recovering from surgery at her Sheboygan home, Stauber gives virtual lessons

Teachers are sometimes criticized for not using the technology available to them enough in the classroom.

That's not the case for Cedar Grove-Belgium High School science teacher Tina Stauber, who is teaching a senior advanced chemistry class from her Sheboygan home while she recuperates from surgery.

She teaches the college chemistry course for Lakeland Technical College in Cleveland.

Stauber was concerned her students, although among the brightest in the school, would be at a disadvantage if they missed several weeks of instruction and had to rely solely on their independent study skills.

She turned to the school's technology guru Brad Navis, who set up a video conference program

that allows her to conduct lectures from her home during class and connect with students at home.

All the students have access to Web cams on laptops or home computers in addition to classroom computers.

In the chemistry classroom, Stauber can be seen on a screen set near her empty desk. Substitute teacher Patrick Hollett, who is teaching Stauber's other science classes, is usually in the classroom.

Although Hollett has a chemistry degree, he doesn't have a master's degree, which is required for a college-level course.

"It's working OK, but it's a little more difficult than I thought," Stauber said of the arrangement.

"They can see me, but I can't see them. I can only see the student in front of the computer, so I can't gauge their responses. When I'm teaching, I can tell by their faces if they're getting it or not. Some things are difficult to explain without knowing what they're comprehending."

Students who have questions funnel them through a student moderator who poses the questions to Stauber. That's usually Alex Ford or Jim Gallagher, who are familiar with the software.

Stauber records lectures and posts reading assignments and PowerPoint explanations that students can access anytime.

She gave a chapter test Monday. They didn't do as well as they usually do, some students said.

"It was a little harder because it required more independent study," said Alex Isken, who is salutatorian of his class. "If you followed the lectures she recorded for us, her e-mails and PowerPoints, I don't think it was that bad. I think it's been working very well."

Mary Asma, who is the class valedictorian, said she's happy her teacher is well enough to give classroom lectures again.

"The first couple of weeks, we weren't able to video conference, and that was difficult," Asma said.

"It's a little more time consuming to ask questions, but we're definitely able to get our points across. It's good to be able to get instruction from her again.

"It was a little difficult adjusting to having her gone, but it's really cool now that we can use technology to connect with her."

The students, who are all seniors, can pay tuition to Lakeland to receive college credit in addition to earning high school credit. Students may also take an advanced-placement test at the end of the school year to receive chemistry credits.

Isken, a student representative on the School Board, told the board about the video arrangement in January.

“We did a practice run before she left and it went pretty good,” Isken told the board. “I thought it was neat that she’s taking the time to help us.”

School Board President Jim Lautenschlaeger agreed.

“It’s really great that you’re using technology to do this, and hopefully we can learn from your experience and use it in other areas,” he said.

Social Studies teacher Dave Claerbaut noted, “This isn’t something she needs to do. It’s something she wants to do because she loves her kids.”

Stauber said she hopes to return to the classroom in person in late February.